Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is:

- Girl-friendly facilities: separate toilets for boys and girls
- Washrooms for girls with water and soap available
- Access to sanitary pads or towels, or other products for discretely absorbing the menstrual flow
- Means for disposal of used menstrual absorption products
- MHM training for teachers, School Health and Nutrition coordinators, and school guidance staff
- Education about menstruation for girls and boys, PTAs, and other parent/community structures
- Booklets and other support materials for pupils and teachers
- School WASH clubs and MHM activities

Keeping Girls in Schools
Mainstreaming Menstrual Hygiene Management in Zambia
Sarah Fry, WASHplus/FHI 360

What is MHM in schools?
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What are the MHM challenges for girls in school?

Menstruating girls frequently experience:

- Fear of standing up to answer questions in case they have a stain on their skirt
- Bullying and teasing from boys
- Shame and fear of people finding out that they are “on their menses”
- Lack of accurate information and fear about what is happening to them
- Health problems related to inability to change their pads regularly
- Taboos about what they can and cannot do, and where they can and cannot be during their menses
- Lack of support and understanding from the adults in their lives: parents, other family members, and teachers

What are the MHM challenges for girls in school?

- MHM is a main strategy for keeping girls in schools and increasing the number of educated girls and women
- Lack of MHM is a big reason why girls stay home from school. Girls can lose up to five days of school per month, then lose track of school work, and eventually drop out
- Access to MHM increases a girl’s confidence, sense of value, and self-worth
- An educated woman contributes significantly to her family’s health and to the development of the country

Menstruation is:

- A natural biological function of all females worldwide
- A natural process of shedding the lining of the uterus every 28 days, if a fertilized egg does not implant itself in the uterus and develop into a baby (though this cycle length may vary for different girls)
- Sometimes painful because the uterus cramps up to shed the lining

Menstruation is NOT:

- An illness or a cure
- Shameful
- A reason to keep girls and women from school, household activities, or work

Why is MHM important?

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Explaining menstruation to girls

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What are some small doable actions for MHM?

While waiting for permanent structures or program elements to support MHM, a school can:

- Engage local stakeholders (local councilors, traditional leaders, civic leaders) in a discussion forum on MHM issues
- Create girl-friendly "corners" or special spaces or clubs with MHM information and supplies
- Make sanitary pads out of locally available materials
-Engage local radio stations to broadcast appealing MHM messages
- Take on MHM from local nurses or environmental health technicians
- Millennium development program for school, PTA, and community
- MHM-themed community events (theater, radio)
- Washrooms for girls
- Water and soap in girls’ washrooms
- Disposal place for used pads
- Emergency pads in a place where girls know to find them
- Comfort kits (bag with pads, panties, soap, booklet on puberty)
- A local pad production program
- Guidance teacher or counselor designated for MHM
- SHN coordinator trained in MHM
- Train all teachers
- WASH Club with MHM activities
- Talks on MHM from local nurses or environmental health technicians
- Pill supply for menstrual pain with guidance or SHN teacher
- Mentoring by older girls for younger girls
- Booklets on puberty for boys and girls
- Guidance materials for teachers
- Visual aids on menstruation and puberty
- Inclusion of menstruation and puberty in classroom subject teaching
- School funds raised and set aside for MHM support (for example, pad purchase)
- Income-generating activities related to MHM (local pad production)

Add your own ideas!