

Menstrual disorders in adolescents: A growing concern in adolescent health.

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Introduction

Menstrual disorders in adolescents are among the most frequent concerns that young individuals and their caregivers face during puberty. As girls transition into womanhood, the onset of menstruation brings not only physical but emotional and psychological changes. However, irregularities in the menstrual cycle such as delayed periods, heavy bleeding, painful menstruation, and missed periods can cause distress and often signal underlying health conditions that require medical attention [1,2].

Adolescents typically experience irregular menstrual cycles for the first few years following menarche, which is considered a normal part of pubertal development. The hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis, which regulates menstruation, is still maturing, leading to anovulatory cycles. However, persistent irregularities beyond two to three years after menarche may indicate disorders such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), thyroid dysfunction, or bleeding disorders. Dysmenorrhea, or painful menstruation, is the most common menstrual complaint in adolescents. Primary dysmenorrhea, characterized by cramping pain in the absence of pelvic pathology, affects a significant proportion of teenage girls and can impact school attendance, physical activity, and social interaction. Secondary dysmenorrhea, often due to conditions such as endometriosis, may present in later adolescence and requires further clinical evaluation. [3,4].

Heavy menstrual bleeding (HMB) is another frequent issue. While some adolescents may simply have a heavier flow due to hormonal imbalances, HMB can also be a sign of bleeding disorders such as von Willebrand disease or platelet function disorders. Untreated heavy bleeding can lead to anemia, fatigue, and decreased quality of life. Amenorrhea, or the absence of menstruation, can be classified as primary or secondary. Primary amenorrhea refers to the absence of menstruation by age 15 in girls with normal secondary sexual characteristics, while secondary amenorrhea is the absence of menstruation for three consecutive cycles in someone who previously had regular periods. Causes can range from stress and excessive physical activity to chronic illnesses and hormonal imbalances. [5,6].

The psychological impact of menstrual disorders in adolescents should not be underestimated. Girls experiencing irregular periods or significant menstrual pain often report

anxiety, embarrassment, and low self-esteem. In some cases, menstrual issues can also interfere with a teenager's academic performance and overall well-being. Early education and open communication between parents, teachers, and healthcare providers are essential to reduce stigma and encourage timely medical consultations. [7,8].

Management of menstrual disorders involves a combination of lifestyle interventions, pharmacological treatment, and, when necessary, referral to a specialist. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), hormonal contraceptives, and iron supplementation are commonly used, depending on the diagnosis. A comprehensive approach that considers both physical and emotional health is vital in ensuring effective care. Menstrual disorders in adolescents are a significant yet often overlooked aspect of adolescent health. Timely recognition, diagnosis, and treatment are key to preventing long-term complications and ensuring the healthy development of young individuals. Increasing awareness, promoting menstrual health education, and removing taboos can empower adolescents to take control of their reproductive health and seek help when needed. [9,10].

Conclusion

Adolescent health is a critical component of public health that shapes the well-being and productivity of future generations. Addressing the physical, mental, and social health needs of adolescents requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach that incorporates education, access to healthcare services, and supportive environments. By promoting healthy behaviors, preventing risky activities, and ensuring timely interventions, we can empower adolescents to make informed choices that positively influence their lifelong health. Investments in adolescent health not only improve individual outcomes but also contribute to stronger, healthier communities and a more resilient society.

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