Adolescent Menstrual Health

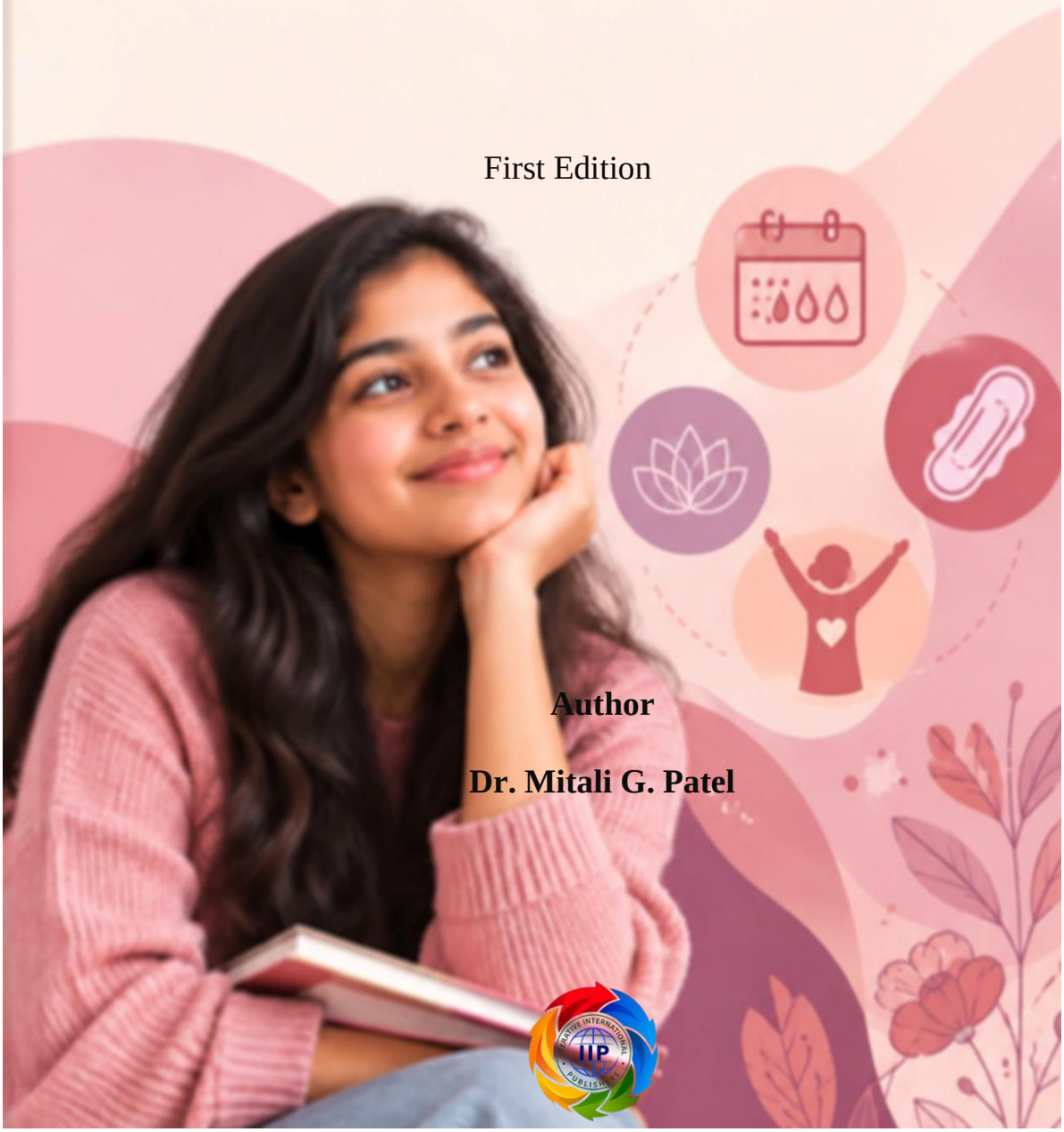
A Comprehensive Guide to
Menstruation, Hygiene and Well-being



Dr. Mitali G. Patel

Adolescent Menstrual Health: A Comprehensive Guide to Menstruation, Hygiene and Well-being

First Edition



Author

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Dr. Mitali G. Patel, Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, NAMO Medical Education and Research Institute, Silvassa.



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About This Handbook

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Important: This handbook gives general health information. It does not replace advice from a doctor or health worker. If you are worried about your health, please visit a doctor, your nearest health centre or an Adolescent Friendly Health Clinic. All stories in this handbook are made up to help explain real situations; names are not of real people.

This handbook is a shorter, easy-to-read edition of the book Adolescent Menstrual Health: A Comprehensive Guide to Menstruation, Hygiene and Well-being, by the same author.

Foreword



In community medicine, we learn early that the most important health problems are often the ones nobody talks about. Menstruation is a clear example. Every month, hundreds of millions of girls and women across India menstruate. Yet for generations, the subject has been wrapped in silence, shame and myth. We have seen the result in our field practice areas, our schools and our outpatient clinics: girls frightened by their first period because no one had prepared them; girls kept out of school, kitchens and temples; girls using unsafe materials in secret; and girls whose heavy bleeding, severe pain or missing periods went unrecognised for years because "this is how it is for women".

It is therefore a great pleasure for me to introduce this handbook, written by my colleague Dr Mitali Patel, Associate Professor in the Department of Community Medicine at NAMO Medical Education and Research Institute, Silvassa.

It arrives at an important moment. India has made remarkable progress: most young women now use hygienic menstrual products, and national programmes such as the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram, Anemia Mukt Bharat and the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme reach adolescents in every district. In January 2026, the Supreme Court of India recognised the right to menstrual health as part of the right to life under Article 21, and directed that every school provide free sanitary napkins, functional toilets with water and menstrual health education. What is needed now is knowledge that reaches the girl herself, and the adults around her, in a form they can understand and use.

That is exactly what this handbook offers. It speaks to girls warmly and in plain language, with pictures on almost every page, and gives parents and teachers simple tips they can use at once. It is grounded in evidence and in Indian reality — written for the girl who uses cloth because pads are costly, the school without running water, and the family that follows restrictions out of love. Many of its messages and illustrations grew out of Dr Patel's own awareness sessions, Let's Talk Periods.

I commend Dr Mitali Patel for the care and compassion she has brought to this work. I hope this handbook finds a place in every school, every Anganwadi, every Adolescent Friendly Health Clinic and every home where a girl is growing up — and that it helps create a generation of girls who can say, with confidence and without shame: My period, my health.



Dr. Darshan K. Mahyavanshi, MD (PSM)
Medical Superintendent; Professor and Head,
Department of Community Medicine
NAMO Medical Education and Research Institute,
Silvassa, UT of DNH & DD

A Note from the Author



When a girl in India gets her first period, what happens next often depends on luck. If she is lucky, someone has told her what to expect. She has a pad or clean cloth in her bag, a clean toilet at school, a mother who smiles, and a doctor who listens if something feels wrong. If she is unlucky, she may think she is dying. She may be sent out of the kitchen, kept home from school, and told she is impure.

In my years of working in community medicine — in villages, urban slums, schools and health centres — I have met both kinds of girls. I have seen how much difference a few minutes of accurate, kind information can make. This handbook is my attempt to make that difference less a matter of luck.

Many of its messages and pictures first took shape in my awareness talk, Let's Talk Periods. The questions girls, parents and teachers asked me — Is menstrual blood dirty? Is a three-day period normal? Why does it hurt? Is white discharge a disease? — shaped every page. Read it on your own, read it with your mother or daughter, or use it in your classroom. Share it with your brothers and fathers too. Your period is not something to hide. It is a sign of your health.

My period, my health. May every girl be able to say those words with pride.



Dr. Mitali Patel, Silvassa

Acknowledgements

This handbook belongs to many people. I thank the adolescent girls who asked honest questions and told me what was confusing or missing, and their families, who joined our conversations with openness and courage. I am indebted to the teachers and school principals who tested these ideas in real Indian classrooms, and to the ASHAs, ANMs and Anganwadi workers of our field practice areas, whose daily work kept this handbook grounded in reality.

I am deeply grateful to Dr Darshan K. Mahyavanshi, Medical Superintendent, Professor and Head, Department of Community Medicine, NAMO Medical Education and Research Institute, Silvassa, for his guidance, encouragement and Foreword, and to my colleagues, residents and staff in the Department of Community Medicine, NAMO MERI. I thank the illustrators and the publishing team at IIP Publication, and my family for their love and support.

To every girl who has ever felt ashamed of her period: this handbook is for you.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook has **18 short chapters**. You can read them in order, or go straight to the one you need.

Look out for these boxes:

Box	What it means
Meet…	A short story about a girl like you
Myth vs Fact	Common beliefs, and the truth
See a Doctor If…	Warning signs you should never ignore
Did You Know?	Interesting facts
Try This	Something you can do today
Ask the Doctor	Questions girls often ask
For Parents & Teachers	Simple tips for the adults who care for you
Remember	The most important points of each chapter

Remember three simple tools from this handbook: the **PERIOD check** (Chapter 6), the **4 Cs of hygiene** (Chapter 8) and **My Period Kit** (Chapter 5).

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My period, my health.

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About the Authors

Dr. Mitali G. Patel is a dedicated public health professional with over a decade of experience in community medicine, adolescent health and preventive care. She has worked extensively in villages, urban slums, schools and health centres, focusing on maternal and child health, adolescent well-being and health education. Through her awareness talks, including the widely appreciated Let's Talk Periods, she has reached thousands of girls, parents and teachers, helping to break myths and create open, supportive conversations around menstruation and reproductive health.

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