

Debunking five period myths for Menstrual Awareness Month



Menstruation is a natural bodily process but is yet looked down upon today – there are numerous ludicrous misconceptions surrounding menstruation in our society. In conjunction with Aurelius Healthcare Malaysia’s Menstrual Awareness Month, Dr. Azizah binti Rusly, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist at Aurelius Hospital Nilai helps us to debunk some common myths surrounding menstruation.

Menstruation is the discharge mainly of blood and uterine lining that vagina-owners have every month, essentially a self-cleansing process. Products and facilities for menstrual hygiene has come a long way, however, according to a report by the World Bank Group, at least 500 million women and girls worldwide face period poverty i.e., lacking proper access to sanitary products and facilities for menstrual hygiene management. With the lack of access comes the limited awareness and understanding of the best way to manage menstrual hygiene.

Myth: “My mum said I need to wash my pad because blood is dirty, and it will attract devils!”

Dr. Azizah: Period blood is similar to other blood from our body and is not dirty. It is made up of blood, uterus membrane, mucus lining, and bacteria. While it can sometimes appear to be clotted or darker, such occurrences are completely normal.

Disposable pads should be appropriately wrapped and thrown after a single use. However, if you are using reusable pads or menstrual cups, soak them with cold water and wash using normal detergent, baking soda, or vinegar. It is also important to keep them dry! Doing so can avoid infections.

Myth: “I used to hide my sanitary products as it is inappropriate and disrespectful to be shown in public.”

Dr. Azizah: Sanitary products are everyday lifestyle items just like tissue and toothpaste, which support and help women feel more comfortable during menstruation. Every woman should have the freedom to purchase sanitary products without feeling embarrassed about a monthly natural occurrence.

Myth: “A tampon will break my hymen.”

Dr. Azizah: Tampons may cause some stretch or tear of the hymen, but this could also happen when you engage in vigorous activities. Some women may experience discomfort when inserting a tampon the first few times – however, it will eventually get better!

Myth: “I was told that sticking a washed pad to my face gives me clear skin.”

Dr. Azizah: It is unhygienic as menstrual waste or products should be disposed of properly.

The methods for getting clear skin will vary depending on a person’s skin type. A healthy and balanced diet can help you be the best version of yourself [and your skin], so eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, drink an adequate amount of water, and exercise at least three times a week.

Myth: “I should avoid cold foods/beverages as it will give me heavier flow and period cramps.”

Dr. Azizah: There are no studies to prove or disprove the effects of cold drinks or food on menstrual cramps. Menstruation is connected to the reproductive system, whereas eating or drinking is linked to the digestive system. These systems function separately and do not affect one another. However, some women are sensitive to cold food or drinks, which might increase or induce cramps. At the end of the day, you should know what your body is used to and act accordingly.