



The Women's Outcomes Research & Knowledge Study

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2024

Hello!

Summer is the perfect time to embrace new adventures and create lasting memories.

To help you make the most of this sunny season, we are excited to share with you, "Mission Menstruation X MSU," written by **Nupur Huria**, Student Research Assistant in the Department of Health Promotion and Outreach at Michigan State University. We extend our sincere thanks to Nupur for being our guest author and for using her voice to address period poverty and reduce the stigma surrounding menstruation!



We also know that summer is a great season to spend time outdoors and take part in physical activities, such as swimming, hiking, or playing beach volleyball, etc. Therefore, we are sharing some tips on how you can make a plan to find fun ways to be active.

Warm wishes for a happy, safe, and memorable summer!

Mission Menstruation X MSU

By Nupur Huria

A few years ago, I would have never guessed that I would be so public about my personal experiences with menstruation. This is because I, along with many other menstruators, have been conditioned to believe that menstrual experiences are something to keep hushed and hidden from others.

Period poverty and stigma are often ignored public health issues that push many menstruators to adopt unhygienic practices, negatively impacting their health, education, and dignity. Menstruators should not have to worry about where their next tampon or pad will come from, and they should be available for free in every restroom just like soap and toilet paper. Many resort to unhygienic alternatives, risking toxic shock syndrome, cervical cancer, and urological infections. Menstrual stigma can go so far as to affect psychological health. Many are self-conscious about menstruation and go to unusual lengths to hide it. Access to these products should be a basic right and there should be no stigma or shame around something as natural as menstruation. A dignified menstrual experience should not be the privilege of a few, but a right for every menstruator.

There has always been an extreme stigma surrounding menstruation in my Indian culture, but I was lucky to grow up in an open-minded community that encouraged me to use my voice. My community's overwhelming support fueled my passion for this cause throughout high school and into my undergraduate education as the Lead Advocate for Mission Menstruation X MSU.

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When I joined MSU as a freshman, Mission Menstruation was distributing free menstrual products on campus in ten locations. Encouraged by their progress and MSU administration's support, I reached out to the founders to start a student chapter organization. I was determined to carry out their vision of providing access to free products in all campus restrooms.

I launched Mission Menstruation X MSU, recruited advocates, and established our presence on the MSU app. We leveraged existing products to double our product distribution locations. By the end of fall, I secured \$6,500 from the student government and Residence Halls Association to fund products for further expansion. With a broader presence, track record of product usage, and positive feedback from menstruators, we were ready to approach the administration to fund campus-wide implementation.

Although the administration was very supportive, they lacked data that would justify the costs associated with a campus-wide program. I worked with the Department of Epidemiology and College of Human Medicine and Public Health professors to create and roll-out a survey, which confirmed the need and benefits of providing free menstrual products on campus. In an effort to develop a reasonable budget, I consulted with Hospeco, a product dispenser manufacturer. They not only provided me with cost and logistics information, but also connected me with universities that had successfully implemented similar programs. Under the mentorship of the Assistant Vice President of Housing Services and with help from the Campus Services Manager, I developed a phased approach proposal, starting with first-floor restrooms of student-facing buildings.

Michigan State University approved our proposal in July of 2022 to install free product dispensers in all first floors of academic buildings in female-assigned and gender-neutral restrooms—a huge step forward. Implementation was completed in February 2023, and since then, our work has been recognized by several outlets such as NPR Morning Edition, WILX 10, The Gander, and The State News. Our team is committed to expanding free product availability for male-assigned restrooms and promoting sustainable products. We hope to inspire other communities and universities to create a more equitable campus environment for menstruators.



Photos: Mission Menstruation x MSU members sharing their work with Michigan State University students and creating awareness about free menstrual products available on campus.



Walk. Run. Dance. Play. What's your move?

According to the newest “Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans,” physical activity is one of the best things you can do to maintain or improve your health. And no matter who you are or how you're feeling today, you can find safe, fun ways to get a little more active. Physical activity can boost your mood, sharpen your focus, reduce stress, and improve your sleep. There are so many benefits!



Many girls and young women have less energy than normal just before and during the first days of their menstrual periods, when bleeding and cramping may be heavier. High-intensity exercises like running may feel overwhelming or uncomfortable. Instead, yoga can be a good way to help reduce period pain. Yoga can reduce stress, improves flexibility, and strengthens muscles.

During lighter menstrual days, you might want to try moderate-intensity aerobic exercises like walking or light jogging. This type of physical activity can reduce bloating (extra water retention) and the pain of cramping. Most important, listen to your body and do activities that feel right for you.

Just getting started? Build up to 150 minutes each week, over time. Even 5 minutes of physical activity has health benefits—and it all adds up.

Pregnant or postpartum? It's safe and healthy to be active during and after pregnancy—and getting active can make it less likely that you'll develop health problems like postpartum depression. It's always best to consult with your healthcare provider before starting an exercise program.

Have a disability, chronic condition, or ongoing health problem? You can adapt activities to fit your abilities—and you may find that physical activity makes everyday life easier. You may want to consult a health care professional or physical activity specialist, about the types and amounts of activity appropriate for your abilities and chronic conditions.

Not feeling steady on your feet? Mix in activities to improve your balance and lower your risk of falls—like tai chi, Pilates, or swimming.

Already get 150 minutes a week? You can set a goal for more activity (300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity) or more intensity (150 minutes of vigorous activity) or focus on trying activities that you've never done or on changing up current activities like trying a new walking trail. The more you move, the better!

Don't forget to work your muscles! At least 2 days a week, do activities that build muscle strength, like lifting weights or using resistance bands.

A mix of activities is important for wellness, so aim for that mix in your weekly plan!

To make your own activity plan, visit: <https://health.gov/moveyourway/activity-planner>

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