

ABSTRACT

Nutritional Status and Menstrual Discomforts among College Students in Puducherry

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In India, about 50% of adolescent girls have no information or understanding of the basic biological process (CREA 2005). Due to lack of information on this natural phenomenon it leads to reproductive tract infection (RTIs) and other reproductive health problems. Many misconceptions, superstitions, taboos and myths are associated with menstruation that has caused damage to womankind. Menstrual hygiene management practices developed in adolescent are likely to persist until adult life and social activates and gynecologists have recommended interventions to change behavior directed towards improving menstrual hygiene as a strategy to RTIs and to promote reproductive health. Hence this study was ventured upon. The objectives of the study were to assess the nutritional status of college going students and to study if nutritional status had an influence on severity of menstrual discomforts. This study was conducted in Puducherry during the months of January and April 2008. The sample size was 200 college going girls between the age group of 18 and 21 years. A self administered questionnaire was used to elicit information on menstrual discomforts experienced. Anthropometric measurements like height, weight, waist and hip circumference were measured to assess BMI and WHR which reflect the nutritional status. Standard prescribed tools and norms were used and followed for measuring the same. Effort was taken to study if nutritional status had any influence on menstrual discomforts. Percentages were used as a mean comparable measure. The findings showed those individuals who were overweight, obese and those who had WHR above the normal range reported of physical and behavioral discomforts. The same was the result with those who were chronically energy deficient. Most of the samples with family history of menstrual discomforts had experienced the same. Maintaining normal BMI and WHR during the adolescent years can prevent many health complications during the reproductive years.

Key words: Nutritional Status, Menstrual Discomfort, Body Mass Index (BMI), Obesity, Waist Hip Ratio(WHR), Chronic Energy Deficient (CED)