

Experiences at Menarche Supplement

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Introduction

The timing of menarche is an important biological marker and has been linked in past research to a range of health outcomes. Moreover, experiences at menarche are impactful and may shape individuals' perceptions of menstruation during subsequent menstrual periods. Experiences include the perceptions, emotions, and encounters that individuals have during their first menstruation.

Reasons to include **menarche experience** measures in your work:

- To capture experiences at menarche
- To understand the influence of experiences at menarche on later menstrual health experiences
- To understand the relationship between menarche experience and sexual and reproductive health (SRH)

The Adolescent Menstrual Experiences and Health Cohort (AMEHC) Study will measure experiences at menarche to increase our understanding of their influence on girls' lives.

Overview of Experiences at Menarche: Perceptions, Emotions, and Encounters

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Definition | The perceptions, emotions, and encounters that individuals have during their first menstruation. |
| Importance to Menstrual Health | <p>Knowledge about menstruation before menarche is a proposed core indicator for menstrual health progress at national and global levels.^{1,2} Past research finds that girls frequently lack information about menstruation before menarche, leading to unpreparedness in managing menstrual bleeding and uncertainty about where to seek support.^{3,4}</p> <p>Menarche experiences are hypothesized to set the stage for later attitudes towards menstruation and menstrual experiences.⁵</p> <p>Past research has found that early timing menarche is associated with poorer mental health and SRH challenges in later adolescence.⁶</p> |
| Measurement Method | All questions: Self-reported by girls on an enumerator-administered survey |
| General Considerations | Before asking questions about experiences at menarche, consider asking if the participant has had her first menstrual period and when her first period was. These questions can help understand which participants to ask the menarche experience questions and can contextualize the participants' answers about menarche experiences. |
| Question Source | <p>Men1,2: Swe ZY, Mon NO, Than KK, et al. Adolescent girls' experiences of menstruation and schooling in monastic schools in Magway Region, Myanmar: A mixed-methods exploration. <i>Front Reprod Health</i>. 2022;4:893266. doi:10.3389/frph.2022.893266</p> <p>M3: Hennegan J, Swe ZY, Than KK, et al. Monitoring Menstrual Health Knowledge: Awareness of Menstruation at Menarche as an Indicator. <i>Front Glob Womens Health</i>. 2022;3:832549. doi:10.3389/fgwh.2022.832549</p> <p>Other questions were developed specifically for the AMEHC study and can be cited using the protocol.</p> |

| Construct's Main Use in the AMEHC Study | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Proximal Exposure for: | Distal Exposure for: | Covariate for: | Outcome for: |
| Menstrual health experiences | Mental Health | | |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | SRH outcomes (e.g., early pregnancy) | | |
|--|---|--|--|

| Included in the Following AMEHC Study Activities* | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Baseline Girls Survey | Baseline Guardians Survey | Baseline School Audit | Sub-cohort 1 Survey | Sub-cohort 2 Survey | Sub-cohort 3 Survey |
| X | | | | | |
| Wave 1 Survey | Wave 1 School Audit | Wave 2 Survey | Wave 2 Guardian Survey | Wave 2 School Audit | |
| X (for those newly menstruating only) | | X (for those newly menstruating only) | | | |

***Specific questions varied over different data collection activities according to study needs.**

Timing of Menarche Survey Questions in AMEHC

| Question Number | Question | Response Options |
|-----------------|--|---|
| M2 | Have you had your first menstrual period? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes • Don't know |
| M4 | When was your first menstrual period? [Enumerator note: if she does not know the month, provide best guess] | ___ month ___ year |

*This question is used in combination with the timing of the survey, and girls' self-reported age to understand the timing of menarche.

Experiences at Menarche Survey Questions in AMEHC

| Question Number | Question | Response Options |
|-----------------|---|---|
| M3 | Before you had your first menstrual period, were you aware of menstruation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes • Don't know |
| Men1 | Do you feel that you were prepared for your first menstrual period? <i>Read response options</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Maybe • Yes |
| Men2 | When you had your first menstrual period, did you talk to anyone about it? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes |

| | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| Men2_who | <p>Who did you talk to?</p> <p>Anyone else?</p> <p><i>Do not read response options</i> <i>Select all that apply</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother [0/1] • Friends [0/1] • Teacher [0/1] • Older Sister [0/1] • Younger Sister [0/1] • Health care provider [0/1] • Father [0/1] • Brother [0/1] • Grandmother [0/1] • Grandfather [0/1] • Husband [0/1] • Sister-in-law (bhabhi) [0/1] • Aunt [0/1] • Uncle [0/1] • Other female (e.g., neighbor, relative) [0/1] • Other [0/1] |
| Men2_what | <p>What support did they provide?</p> <p><i>Do not read response options</i> <i>Select all that apply</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None [0/1] • Materials for menstruation [0/1] • Advice or information [0/1] • Comfort or emotional support [0/1] • Other [0/1] |
| Men3 | <p>Thinking about your first menstrual period, please look at the 6 words on your survey</p> <p>Which two words do you think best describe how you felt during your first period?</p> <p><i>Girls were provided with printed cards displaying the 6 words.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excited [0/1] • Afraid [0/1] • Ashamed [0/1] • Proud [0/1] • Inconvenienced (bothersome) [0/1] • Fine (not bothered/not a big deal) [0/1] |
| Men4 | <p>During your first menstrual period, did you experience any leaking or staining?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes • Don't remember |

References

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