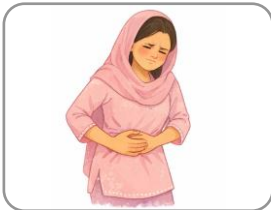




AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women's Health

As women, our bodies go through many changes from young age to old age.
These changes are natural, and it's important to understand them.



Menstruation

- When a girl reaches a certain age, which is different for each person, she starts her period, also called the menstrual cycle. This happens every month. It means the body is growing and noticeable physical changes occur. It is normal to bleed for five to 10 days and have mild cramps. If bleeding is heavy and pain is unbearable, it is important to see a doctor. In Islam, women and girls are not required to pray or fast during their menstruation. During your period, rest and do not work too much.



Pregnancy

- When a woman is pregnant, a baby is growing inside her body. During this time, she needs healthy food, clean water, rest, and regular check-ups with a doctor or midwife. It is normal to feel nausea, fatigue, and gain weight during pregnancy. Pregnancy lasts nine months and is divided into three trimesters. In Islam, we believe that the soul enters the fetus four months after conception. During pregnancy, do not use drugs, drink alcohol, or smoke. This is very dangerous for your unborn child. Also, avoid lifting heavy objects and do not work too much. This can lead to miscarriage.



Miscarriage

- Sometimes, a pregnancy ends too early. This is called a miscarriage. If a baby dies before birth later in the pregnancy, it is called a stillbirth. Sometimes the cause of this is unknown. This is very sad and is not the mother's fault. This can cause psychological distress in parents. They should consider counseling, support groups, or talking to loved ones. In Islam, we believe that the miscarried fetus will carry his mother by his umbilical cord into Paradise.



Childbirth

- A baby is born after nine months of pregnancy. Childbirth begins when a woman's water breaks and contractions begin. It can happen anytime within a few hours to days. Childbirth can be painful, but skilled doctors or midwives can help make it safe. Having a support person or a doula present who can advocate for the mother during childbirth is important. A baby born before 37 weeks of pregnancy is premature and requires neonatal intensive care to help them grow. Childbirth can be vaginal or C-section delivery when a woman or baby's life is at risk. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "The woman who dies in pregnancy or childbirth is a martyr."



Nursing

- After the baby is born, mothers produce milk in their breasts. This is called breastfeeding. Breast milk is the best food for the child. It gives the baby everything it needs to grow strong and healthy. In Islam, God commands mothers to nurse their babies for two whole years or to hire a foster suckling mother to do so (Qu'ran 2:233). Breastfeeding is not easy. Seek assistance, if you need it. Some women are unable to produce breast milk. There can be shame and guilt associated with this; it is not the mother's fault. Seek support and alternatives.



Lochia

- After childbirth, a woman bleeds for a few weeks. This is called lochia. It is the body's way of cleansing and healing itself internally. Childbirth can take a toll on the body and inside wounds need time to heal. Rest, hydration, good nutrition, and clean pads help during this time. A mother's healthy diet enriches her breast milk, which in turn benefits the baby.



Postpartum Depression

- After pregnancy and childbirth, your hormones need time to come back to normal. Also, the stress of being a mother and other responsibilities can cause some women to feel very sad or tired after childbirth. This is called postpartum depression, anxiety, or psychosis. Maternal depression is when that feeling happens long after childbirth and can cause negative thoughts. If you feel like crying a lot or no longer enjoy things, talk to someone you trust or see a doctor.



Self-Care

- To improve your mental health at any point in life, it is important to make time to care for yourself. Exercising, eating a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, relaxing, talking to friends, and engaging in activities you enjoy are examples of self-care. Taking care of yourself helps you to be the best version of yourself so that you can manage your daily responsibilities. Most importantly, you deserve to feel happy.



Perimenopause

- In your 40s, your body starts to change again. Your periods may become less regular. This is called perimenopause. You may feel hot, tired, or have a negative mood. These changes are natural.



Menopause

- When a woman's menstrual periods stop completely, it is called menopause. This usually happens around the age of 50. It means the body has finished its childbearing years. Women at this age are wise and strong.



Support Each Other

- Every stage of a woman's life brings its own beauty, strength, and challenge. From the first period to the last, from carrying a child to raising one, from pain to joy, we go through a lot and we are never alone. Let's teach our daughters that these changes are not shameful but natural. Let's remind our mothers and sisters that their health and well-being are important as well.

This handout is for information purposes only. For additional information about women's health, we encourage you to seek medical advice, diagnosis, and treatment from a doctor.