



## Self-Care of Adolescent Girls in Puberty: A Missing Need in the Health System

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### Dear Editor-in-Chief

Puberty is one of the most critical stages of life for girls, during which they experience significant changes in their body systems that require preparation to cope with (1). The average age of puberty for girls is typically between 10 and 11 yr old, with the process typically completed by 15 to 17 yr old (2). More than 50% of the global population is under the age of 25, and among them, approximately one-fifth (around half a billion) are teenagers (3).

Today, focusing on the health of adolescents is a crucial matter that has received significant attention and prioritization from the WHO, particularly regarding the self-care of adolescent girls, as they are more vulnerable than their male counterparts (4). The Cairo International Conference on Population and Development has also emphasized the importance of identifying and providing care for adolescent girls (5). Neglecting the educational, physical, and psychological needs of this stage can jeopardize their transition into adulthood and hinder their potential to become a productive workforce for society (6).

In this regard, the WHO has placed significant emphasis on promoting self-care among girls during puberty (4). Self-care during this stage entails the ability of girls to recognize their health

needs, access suitable health resources, and effectively manage their health conditions. This includes seeking specialized reproductive and sexual health services and assistance (7). Girls often lack the necessary knowledge regarding puberty and are frequently unaware of their health needs during this period and, consequently, may neglect self-care practices. Furthermore, the healthcare system often does not adequately address the issue of self-care among adolescent girls (7, 8).

Promotion of physical self-care among girls during puberty is crucial, particularly concerning the various physical changes that occur during this stage. These changes include the growth of axillary and pubic hair, breast development, acne and pimples, sleep disturbances, together with accident prevention, and the importance of avoiding tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and excessive mobile phone use. Accordingly, it is essential to place greater emphasis on providing accurate information, education, and guidance through the media to counter the challenge of accessing misinformation in this area. Additionally, it is recommended to give more attention to aspects such as nutrition, regular exercise, adequate vitamin intake, weight management, and appropriate tests and screenings (9).



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Other crucial aspects of promoting self-care among girls in the realm of sexual health include practices such as maintaining menstrual hygiene and undergoing screenings for women's cancers such as breast cancer, cervical cancer, and sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS (8). Screening for prevalent mental health issues like depression, anxiety, stress, and violence also plays a significant role in their self-care and can contribute to preventing adolescent suicide (6).

In the social sphere, teaching adolescents how to interact with their peers is crucial due to the significant influence peers have on them. This education helps reduce risky behaviors and strengthens life skills, including the ability to say assertively no (10). Furthermore, it is essential to provide education on effective communication with family and society. Receiving accurate information and support from family and society play vital roles in the self-care of adolescent girls (9).

The healthcare system, family, and society are all influential factors in promoting self-care among girls during their puberty. Therefore, educating these stakeholders is of utmost importance, as they have a significant role in enhancing the promotion of self-care for girls during this transformative period (6).

Assessing the health of adolescents during puberty can be undertaken by the adolescents themselves, their families, or the healthcare system, utilizing valid and reliable tools specifically designed and adapted for this purpose (7, 9). There is currently a lack of a written self-care program specifically tailored for girls during puberty. Therefore, it is recommended to develop a national self-care program for girls during puberty, taking into account the cultural nuances of each society. By doing so, this issue can be recognized as a significant priority within the healthcare system.

## Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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