IMA encourages use of safe water and safe sanitary pads on World Menstrual Hygiene Day

Says menstrual hygiene as important as food and water hygiene

New Delhi, 28 May 2017: According to statistics, between 43% and 88% of adolescent girls in urban India use reusable cloth for their periods, but do not clean them properly. A majority of rural women also employ rags during menstruation. These predispose them to reproductive tract infections as it is difficult for them to keep these used clothes and rags clean and free of harmful bacteria.

In India, only 1 out of 2 girls have knowledge about menstruation before their first period. Statistics also indicate that only about 12% of Indian women are able to employ the commercially available sanitary napkins as an alternative. Every year, 28th May marks the World Menstrual Hygiene Day. The theme this year is "Education about menstruation changes everything". Menstrual hygiene is as important as food and water hygiene.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said," Safe water and safe sanitary pads both are important for maintaining menstrual hygiene. In India, there is still a lot of ambiguity about menstrual hygiene. Using unclean cloth during menstruation can increase the risk of infections by up to 200%. Repeated use of unclean clothes and improper drying of used cloth before its reuse in menstruation can harbour microorganisms and thereby cause RTI. There is a need to conduct awareness programmes, particularly in government schools, about the onset of periods and practicing hygiene during those days. Girls cannot predict the onset of menstruation and therefore, schools should have a ready supply of sanitary napkins."

As part of the World Menstruation Day this year, the IMA is also campaigning to encourage education and awareness on this topic which is still considered taboo by many in the country.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "This day offers the opportunity to create awareness on the importance for women and girls to hygienically manage their menstruation, safely and with dignity. It is imperative to educate girls and women alike on safe and hygienic practices to be followed during their menstrual cycle to avoid any infections and ensure good health."
Here are some basic menstrual hygiene tips you can follow.

- **Choose your method of sanitation** Be it sanitary napkins, tampons, or menstrual cups, choose what you are comfortable in.
- **Change regularly** It is important to change the sanitary pad every 3 to 4 hours at least in the first two days. An excessively damp pad can harbour microorganisms and cause infection.
- **Wash yourself regularly** Clean yourself every time you use the washroom or change, as this will keep you away from infections and also remove any bad odour.
- **Avoid using soaps or vaginal hygiene products** Soap can kill the good bacteria and make way for infections. It should only be used on the external parts.
- **Discard the used sanitary product properly** Used products can spread infections and can smell foul. It is therefore important to wrap it properly and discard it in a proper way.

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

**For further information please contact:**
Sanjeev Khanna - 9871079105
Md Adib Ahmad – 9873716235
hsgima@gmail.com
IMA Public & Media Advocacy Cell