**Garifuna**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** Menstruating women are said to pose a threat to others because the scent of menstrual blood attracts malevolent spirits, variously referred to as wináni and máfia. These spirits do not harm the woman who attracts them, but they can injure and even kill those around her — not only infants, who are particularly vulnerable to harm by spirits, but also children and adults. But nearly all women agree that they refrain from participating in düg□, the paramount ritual for the dead, when they menstruate. Menstruating women are supposed to stay at home and to avoid public gatherings, especially ritual events (not because they are “unclean” but because the scent of their menstrual blood might attract malevolent spirits). Before and after childbirth women also observe a set of formal restrictions that limit activity and movement. (These are more numerous and strictly enforced than those that apply to fathers of unborn or newborn children.) Like the ones that pertain to menstruation, the stated purpose of these restrictions is to protect other people. It is surely not a coincidence that so many specific restrictions surround menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth. Menstruation indicates fecundity; pregnancy and childbirth demonstrate it. In other words, they provide tangible evidence of a childbearing capacity.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1983

**Focal Year:** 1974 – 1976

**Citation:** Kerns, V. (1983). Women and the ancestors: Black Carib kinship and ritual. University of Illinois Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=sa12-004

**Description:** During their menstrual periods, girls and women must not eat any of the products of the hunt, nor handle the hunters' weapons or dogs, as the latter's luck would be “spoilt” should they do so. Nor must they take part at this time in any ceremonial dances or songs.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1951

**Focal Year:** 1947 – 1948

**Citation:** Taylor, D. M. (1951). The Black Carib of British Honduras. In Publication in anthropology (p. 185). Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=sa12-007

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied.

**Haitians**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** Adolescents of both sexes, and women during the menstrual period, must abstain from acid fruits, such as oranges and pineapples. A crop of yams or sweet potatoes will be lost if a jealous enemy buries a cloth soaked with menstrual blood in the field.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1951

**Focal Year:** 1806 – 1951

**Citation:** Métraux, A., Berrouet, E., Comhaire-Sylvain, S., & Comhaire-Sylvain, J. (1951). Making a living in the Marbial Valley, Haiti. In Occasional papers in education (Issue 10, p. 220). UNESCO. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=sv03-011

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Huichol**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** The girl is usually frightened at her first menstruation, but her mother tells her it is the custom among Huichol women. Menstruation is not regarded with horror, and there is no isolation and no suggestion of uncleanness.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1934

**Focal Year:** 1933

**Citation:** Klineberg, O. (1934). Notes on the Huichol. American Anthropologist, Vol. 36(3), 446–460. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/nu19/documents/010

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied.

**Island Carib**

**Aka Callinago**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** Nevertheless, girls and women maintain a certain seclusion at their menstrual periods, especially the first, and do not leave the house, even to bathe in the river or for their personal necessities. Were they to do so, it is said that the “fresh” odor of their blood would cause the “dog spirits” to follow and attack them and any other person who might take the same track. Actual contact with such blood would bring about local swelling, while any man so foolish as to have connection with a menstruating woman would inevitably suffer from severe backache and general debility for some time after. In Creole patois, a woman's menstrual period is known as her moon, and the Indians, formerly at any rate, held the moon to be responsible for this “sickness.”  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1938

**Focal Year:** 1930 – 1937

**Citation:** Taylor, D. M. (1938). The Caribs of Dominica. Bulletin ; Anthropological Papers, 103–159. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=st13-006

**Description:** The Carib women do not approach anyone when they have their menstrual cycle upset and they will not allow anyone to approach them, no matter what bad treatment they receive for this conduct, because they believe that this would upset the cycle more.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1665

**Focal Year:** 1650

**Citation:** Breton, R., McKusick, M. B., & Verin, P. (1665). Carib-French dictionary. Par Gilles Bovqvet. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=st13-002

**Description:** Girls and women are required to observe both dietary and occupational restrictions during their menstrual periods. At these times, they must on no account eat any products of the chase killed by dog or gun. One informant told how his dogs had inexplicably become heavy and incapable of speed; and how, on hearing a sort of slopping noise in their bellies, he had made investigations, and discovered that his own sister, out of gluttony, had concealed her condition and partaken of his last catch. Some say that a gun or dogs so “spoiled” may be “blessed,” and thus put back to rights; but that in this case, it is the guilty woman who will then suffer for her negligence. Nor must menstruating women handle the hunter's dogs or weapons, cook food, or take part in ceremonial songs and dances. They should not, moreover, wander abroad nor bathe in the river, since spirits of the bush and of the water alike are addicted to women in this condition. In most cultures and at most times, various restrictions have been placed on menstruating women; yet without the concept of some mystical intercourse between killer and killed, eater and eaten, it would be hard to explain how a hunter's dog (or gun) could be contaminated by a menstruating woman's ingestion of its catch, or how such a woman could then be affected by the “blessing” of the injured instrument.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1950

**Focal Year:** 1650 – 1937

**Citation:** Taylor, D. M. (1950). The meaning of dietary and occupational restrictions among the Island Carib. American Anthropologist, Vol. 52, 343–349. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=st13-008

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied.

**Jamaicans**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** In general our female respondents are very positive toward the idea of hygenic douching for they seem to share a certain anxiety over the alleged “uncleanness” of female genitalia. Women feel particularly unclean after menstruation, intercourse, and childbearing, evidently regarding the reproductive tract as a vast, somewhat stagnant area in which “things” can stay and fester.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1961

**Focal Year:** 1953 – 1954

**Citation:** Blake, J., Stycos, J. M., & Davis, K. (1961). Family structure in Jamaica: the social context of reproduction. Free Press of Glencoe. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=sy01-013

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied.

**Kuna**

**Aka Guna**

**Continent:**  Middle America

**Description:** There are sexual tabus during pregnancy and menstruation.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1999

**Focal Year:** 1940s

**Citation:** Marshall, D. S. ([n.d.]//). Cuna folk: a conceptual scheme involving the dynamic factors of culture, as applied to the Cuna Indians of Darien. [s.n.]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/sb05/documents/012

**Description:** Sexual relations are taboo during pregnancy and menstruation;

**Date of Ethnography:** 1947

**Focal Year:** 1600 – 1940s

**Citation:** Stout, D. B. (1947). San Blas Cuna acculturation: an introduction. In Viking Fund publications in anthropology (Issue 9, pp. 124, plates). [s.n.]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/sb05/documents/003

**Description:** When a woman is about to have her menses, her husband gives her a piece of string, mudup , for her to wear until her menstruation is over. After that she hands it back to the man, who ties it round his harpoon. The man then takes a medicine bath. The woman comes to the man, but it is better for him to deny her in order not to lose his strength. She that has worn the string is entitled to one-half of the tortoises that have been harpooned. The woman need not necessarily be the man’s wife.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1938

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1927

**Citation:** Nordenskiöld, E., érez Kantule, R., & Wassén, H. (1938). An historical and ethnological survey of the Cuna Indians. In Comparative ethnographical studies (Vol. 10, pp. xxvii, 686 , plates). Göteborg Museum. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=sb05-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** Potentially Yes. Modern ethnographies only state a sexual intercourse ban but the earliest ethnography talks about a ritual involving a string during menstruation that isn’t mentioned in the more recent ethnographies.

**Maya**

**Aka Yucatec Maya**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** Most appear to cease sexual relations during menstruation. “It's bad—the woman can get sick.”  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1975

**Focal Year:** 1963 – 1968

**Citation:** Press, I. (1975). Tradition and adaptation: life in a modern Yucatan Maya village. Greenwood Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=nv10-019

**Description:** It is considered usual that a woman give birth every two or three years. Such fertility is expected of every married woman, and to insure it she is careful not to partake immoderately of “cold” foods or substances, especially during menstrual periods.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1945

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1937

**Citation:** Villa Rojas, A. (1945). The Maya of east central Quintana Roo. In Publication (pp. xii, 182 , plates). Carnegie Institution of Washington. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=nv10-004

**Description:** Women work as usual during their menses. If rain threatens, a menstruating woman will put off a journey. For if she “gets a cold (ziz)” in her abdomen, she may be prevented from bearing a child. Except for the feeling that it is not good to have intercourse with a woman during her menstruation, and aside from the religious restriction during certain ceremonies.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1934

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1933

**Citation:** Redfield, R., & Villa Rojas, A. (1962). Chan Kom: a Maya village. University of Chicago Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=nv10-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied.

**Miskito**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** MENSTRUAL SECLUSION.—During the menstrual periods (M.: mairin siknis “woman sickness,” kati siknis “monthly sickness”; S.: tiñ dutni, tiñ dutka “bad hand”) the woman is considered unclean and she is shunned by her husband. She must not touch any food intended for other people, otherwise the latter may die. While in this state of impurity the woman must not be seen by a sukya, for that would weaken the latter's connection with the spirits, and perhaps even cause his death. At the conclusion of the third day the woman bathes herself in a neighboring creek and then rejoins her family. All cooking or drinking vessels used by her during this period are broken and thrown away.  
Date of Ethnography: 1932

**Focal Year:** 1502 – 1921

**Citation:** Conzemius, E. (1932). Ethnographical survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua. In Bureau of American Ethnology (pp. vii, 191). U.S. Govt. print. off. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=sa15-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Nahua**

**Aka Aztec**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** The grandmother, or the mother when she learns of it, gives the girl adviction proper care during menstruation. Most warn against bathing or washing the feet or eating “cold” foods, such as pork, avocado, beans, and lemon, since these are believed to stop the flow.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1951

**Focal Year:** 1943 – 1948

**Citation:** Lewis, O. (1951). Life in a Mexican village: Tepoztlán restudied. University of Illinois Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=nu46-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced or implied

**Puerto Ricans**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** Menstruating women and pregnant women should not handle infants, nor should they touch anything belonging to the infant. The remedy for postnatal swollen feet is to bathe them in a mixture of “salvia” and “altamisa”.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1971

**Focal Year:** 1963 – 1964

**Citation:** LaRuffa, A. L. (ca. 1971). San Cipriano; life in a Puerto Rican community. In Library of anthropology: Vol. v. 1 (pp. xiii, 148). Gordon and Breach. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=su01-012

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Quiche Maya**

**Aka K’iche’**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** Indian women do not usually use sanitary devices to absorb the flow of menstrual blood. They generally wear their largest skirts ( cortes ), which can be wrapped around the waist a number of times and changed when wet. When a girl begins to menstruate, her mother tells her that now she must keep her distance from boys. Also, during the times of this “sickness”, she should not eat beans, cheese, or wild herbs, or drink milk, because those foods produce gas in the stomach and cramps.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1960

**Focal Year:** 1910 – 1959

**Citation:** Saler, B. (2018). The road from el Palmar: change, continuity, and conservatism in a Quiché community. ProQuest. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=nw10-005

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Talamancans**

**Aka Bribri**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** At no time when menstruating can the girl serve men at meals, and during this period she must stay aside even in her home, abstain from salt, and drink from a gourd apart from the rest.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1962

**Focal Year:** 1956 – 1959

**Citation:** Stone, D. (1962). The Talamancan tribes of Costa Rica. In Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology (Vol. 43, Issue 2, pp. x, 108). The Peabody Museum. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=sa19-006

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None reference or implied

**Tarahumara**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** There are no restrictions placed on a woman during her menstruation.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1935

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Bennett, W. C., & Zingg, R. M. (Robert M. (1935). The Tarahumara: an Indian tribe of northern Mexico. In Ethnological series (pp. xix, 412 , plates). The University of Chicago Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=nu33-001

**Description:** There are no menstrual taboos placed upon women.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1951

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Fried, J. (1951). Ideal norms and social control in Tarahumara society. [Yale University]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=nu33-010

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Zapotec**

**Continent:** Middle America

**Description:** Intercourse is avoided during the menstrual period.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1960

**Focal Year:** 1956 – 1959

**Citation:** Taylor, R. B. (1979). Teotilan del Valle: a typical Mesoamerican community. University Microfilms. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=nu44-011

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied