Menstruation awareness is something of a recent phenomenon on a national stage. While women have been working to make hygiene products accessible and erase stigmas for a long time, only recently has it been making public waves. Menstruation awareness emphasizes making hygiene products available to those who need them, but it has other facets as well.

A girl’s first period can be exciting because it is a symbol of entering womanhood. But it can also be confusing and a bit intimidating. That’s because a lot of girls are not equipped with all the right information to manage their first menstrual cycle. It’s rare that periods and feminine hygiene is openly talked about in a way that would make a girl feel at ease with this new stage in life.

Society often treats periods and women’s health in general as if it’s something you don’t talk about in public. Menstruation awareness can help erase the stigmas around periods. That doesn’t just apply to girls who will experience menstruation firsthand. Boys need to be in on the conversation too so they know there’s nothing “gross” about a girl being on her period.

Another really important issue menstruation awareness helps with is educating young people about their periods and feminine hygiene. Because of the stigmas we talked about earlier, some girls may not want to talk to their parents or guardians about their periods. If they hear the facts from reliable sources, they will not have good information to follow, the mystery surrounding periods will go away.

The onset of menstruation means a new phase – and new vulnerabilities – in the lives of adolescents. Yet, many adolescent girls face stigma, harassment and social exclusion during menstruation.