



## P24. "MY MAMA TOLD ME IT WOULD HAPPEN?": WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES WITH MENARCHE AND MENSTRUATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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**Context:** Women's experiences with menarche and menstruation vary by region, culture, and tradition. Despite these differences, commonalities often arise regarding menstruation education, beliefs, and experiences.

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to understand how women living in the United States experience menarche and menstruation.

**Methods:** A total of 70 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were collected during Summer 2016. Interviews lasted approximately 1 hour. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Line-by-line, open, and axial coding were utilized to reduce data and build conceptual categories and themes.

**Patient(s):** Women aged 18 years or older (range:19-78) residing in South Carolina within the United States.

**Intervention(s):** The goal of this research was to allow women to share their stories and experiences; therefore, no intervention was implemented. Findings from this study can be used to develop future interventions, programming, and messaging related to menarche and menstruation.

**Main Outcome:** Women's experiences with menstruation and menarche, including knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

**Measure(s):** One-on-one in-depth, interdisciplinary, qualitative interviews.

**Result(s):** Women described their menarches as vivid memories; however, most women had not received proper education or preparation for what to expect prior to onset. Women who received education primarily received this from a family member, school, or a book. Aside from menarche, women discussed their experiences with menstrual products, oral contraceptives, or medical procedures to suppress, manipulate, or manage their menstruation.

**Conclusion(s):** Findings provide practical recommendations for health professionals to further develop effective and timely messaging related to menarche and menstruation. Messaging should inform women on what to expect with menarche and menstruation, different menstrual maintenance products available, and how to reduce social and political stigmas associated with menses.

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