

Women missing class and missing out due to period pain

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Period pain significantly impacts young women's academic performance worldwide, according to new Australian-led research—and women are 'putting up with it' rather than seeking treatment.

New research from Western Sydney University published in the *Journal of Women's Health* has found that, regardless of [geographical location](#) or economic status, more than two thirds (71%) of [young women](#) globally suffer from [painful periods](#).

Furthermore, one in five young women (20%) reported being absent from class due to period [pain](#), while 41% reported that their concentration or performance in class was negatively affected.

Researchers led by NICM Health Research Institute's Dr. Mike Armour examined the results of thirty-eight studies including 21,573 young women. Twenty-three of the studies were from low, lower middle, or upper middle-income countries, and 15 were from high-income countries.

Despite the common held belief women 'grow out' of period pain, rates of dysmenorrhea (period pain) were found to be similar between students at school and university.

Dr. Armour said the research highlights the need for better education around period pain, and has implications for the self-care and treatment of the disorder.

"Young women, whether they were at school or university, experienced significant negative impact on their education as a result of their menstrual symptoms," Dr. Armour said.

"This lowered classroom efficiency during the period is something women often feel they must put up with, meaning that both adolescent girls and young women may be significantly disadvantaged in their studies by the impact of period pain.

"This often occurs at a crucial time in their academic lives during their

final schooling years when academic results can have long term consequences."

Women also reported they had to restrict social, sporting, and other school activities due to menstrual symptoms, negatively affecting health outcomes.

According to Dr. Armour the belief that period pain is a normal part of becoming a woman and the inability of many women to identify the symptoms of [period](#) pain are barriers to women seeking help.

"Improving women's education about menstruation may help women make better choices about self-care and when to seek medical treatment," Dr. Armour said.

This research formed part of the groundwork that led to a 12-month national project from Western Sydney University to change the way young women learn about and deal with menstrual symptoms like [period pain](#). The two-part project supported by U by Kotex. (UbK) aims to reduce the incidence of undiagnosed menstrual disorders, and improve the levels of knowledge and understanding ('health literacy') relating to the menstrual cycle and its management among young [women](#). The results of this study will be published separately and are expected in 2020.

More information: Mike Armour et al, The Prevalence and Academic Impact of Dysmenorrhea in 21,573 Young Women: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Women's Health* (2019). [DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2018.7615](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2018.7615)

Provided by Western Sydney University

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