

# **Perspectives of youth, parents and teachers on menstruation, endometriosis and menstrual health education**

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# YOUNG PERSON, PARENT/CARER, AND SCHOOL TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF **PERIODS, PERIOD PAIN, AND ENDOMETRIOSIS**

Research Report: January 2024

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Credit: Western Sydney University

Western Sydney University has released an insightful new [report](#) into young people's experiences, knowledge, and preferences regarding menstruation and menstrual health education, finding 78% of students surveyed through the research reported that their periods stopped them from participating in activities.

The Young person, parent/caregiver, and school teachers' understanding of periods, [period pain](#) and endometriosis report surveyed 296 [young people](#) (aged 13–18 years), 274 parents and caregivers (who spoke English, Vietnamese, Arabic, Cantonese or Mandarin), and 116 [secondary school teachers](#) in 2022/23.

Furthermore, the study found around two-thirds of the surveyed students wanted schools to provide easily accessible period products and greater freedom to access bathroom facilities when needed and to be given time out of activities when they experienced pain.

Lead author Dr. Christina Curry from the University's School of Education said the research by exploring the perspectives of students, parents and caregivers and teachers emphasized the importance of comprehensive menstrual health education and support that addresses young people's diverse needs and concerns.

"We know in Australia, that around 90% of the population under 25 years of age experience regular period pain," said Dr. Curry.

"Our study found that 78% of students surveyed reported that their

periods stopped them from participating in activities, highlighting a pressing need to implement strategies and policies to effectively support students."

The majority of students (79.1%) indicated that they had learned about periods in their health classes. They also demonstrated awareness of conditions, such as endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Mothers, the internet, and teachers were the primary sources of information about periods for students, followed by social media and friends.

Aligning with the views of young people, the majority of parents and caregivers reported that their child's periods had prevented them from, at times, engaging in activities such as school, study, sport, hobbies, social events, and work. When asked about their child's experiences, nearly three-quarters of parents and caregivers reported giving their child pain medication to manage adverse symptoms.

In relation to teacher responses, it was also found that more than 60% of those surveyed taught about menstrual health in their school, but topics related to addressing period-related pain were only taught by approximately 37% of this cohort.

"Encouragingly, the majority of students are learning about periods in their health classes, seeking information from mothers and the internet predominately, in addition to teachers," said Dr. Curry.

"Current shortfalls in education at schools identified by the report need to be addressed. These include the need to enhance support for [students](#) experiencing menstrual symptoms, accommodating cultural needs, and normalizing conversations and stigma about menstruation.

Monica Forlano, Chair of Endometriosis Australia said the important

research highlighted that strategies should reflect young people's understanding and experiences of menstruation, including common conditions such as dysmenorrhea, heavy menstrual bleeding and endometriosis.

"The findings indicate that by empowering teachers through a whole-school approach, a more inclusive culture may be facilitated that promotes accurate and standardized information, awareness, and support in addressing menstrual issues."

The report puts forward a series of recommendations that emphasize that understanding young people's perceptions of menstrual health education is an important starting point for developing educational strategies.

**More information:** Dr Christina Curry et al, Young Person, Parent/Carer, and School Teachers' Understanding of Periods, Period Pain, and Endometriosis (2024). [DOI: 10.26183/jxtj-p619](https://doi.org/10.26183/jxtj-p619)

Provided by Western Sydney University

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