

**WOMEN'S AND HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS
ABOUT MENSTRUAL PERIODS**

Patient Surveys Results

Table 1 Sample demographics

Age

Age	Number of P's	Percent
18-20	271	19
21-25	414	30
26-30	278	20
31-35	230	16
36-40	209	15
Totals	1402	100
Missing	68	

50% of the sample was age 21 – 30.

Table 2 Education

Education	Number	Percent
< high school	15	1
Some high school	93	7
High school grad	408	30
Associate degree	132	10
College student	307	22
Bachelor degree	247	18
Masters/higher	119	9
Other	54	4
Total	1375	101*
Missing data		95

8 % (108) women had less than high school or some high school

30% (408) were high school graduates

32% (439) had AD or were college students

27% (368) had a bachelor's degree or higher

Table 3 Race

Race	Number	Percent
White	832	59
Black	159	11
Hispanic	280	20
Asian	44	3
Native American/Alaskan	6	0.4
Mixed	50	4
Other	43	3

Total	1414	100.4*
Missing data	56	

Race data was recoded to include Asian, Native American/Alaskan, Mixed and Other in a new category labeled “Other”

In the recoded category of Race, the following distribution was found:

Race	Number	Percent
White	832	59
Black	159	11
Hispanic	280	20
All Other	143	10

Table 4 Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation	Number	Percent
Heterosexual	1294	93
Bisexual	56	4
Lesbian	16	1
Questioning	19	1
Total	1385	99*
Missing data	85	

Eighty-five percent of the sample had a period within the last three months. Of the 15% (n=212) who did not, the following reasons were given:

Using a birth control method that stopped her period – 48%

Using oral contraceptives and skip the placebo pills – 7%

Irregular periods – 9%

Post partum – 4%

Breastfeeding – 4%

Post abortion – 22%

Other – 12%

83% of the sample had used hormonal methods of birth control at some point. Current method of birth control is in

Table 5

Method	Number	Percent
Birth control pills	624	43
Evra patch	64	4
Vaginal ring	43	3
IUD	50	3
Depo Provera	197	14
Condoms	513	35
Diaphragm or cervical cap	21	1

Sterilization	97	7
Rhythm	85	6
Abstinence	148	10
Not sexually active w/ men	47	3

Attitudes Towards Menstruation Tool (ATM)

Women in this sample viewed Menstruation as a Bothersome Event as shown in Table **. Seventy-five percent agreed or strongly agreed that menstrual periods are something they have to put up, 71% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they enjoyed their periods in some way, 48 % agreed or strongly agreed that the only good thing about menstruating is let them know they are not pregnant, and 75% thought that men have a real advantage in not having the monthly interruption of a menstrual period. Sixty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed they hoped it will be possible to get a period over with in a few minutes.

Menstruation as a Bothersome Event

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
Menstrual periods are something I just have to put up with.	5%	10%	11%	48%	27%
In some ways I enjoy my menstrual periods.	43	28	12	13	3
Men have a real advantage in not having the monthly interruption of a menstrual period.	5	7	13	34	41
I hope it will be possible someday to get a menstrual period over with in a few minutes.	5	10	22	31	32
The only thing my period is good for is to let me know I'm not pregnant.	8	26	18	29	19

At the same time, women largely view that menstruation is a natural event (see Table *).

Menstruation as a Natural Event

My period provides a way for me to keep in touch with my body.	16	18	24	35	6
My period reminds me that I am a woman.	7	12	23	43	15
My period allows me to be more aware of my body.	7	14	27	44	8
Periods are an obvious example of the cycles of life.	2	4	15	56	22
The monthly flow of menstruation shows I'm in general good health.	4	15	28	44	10

The construct of Menstruation as Disgusting and Shameful is more complicated (see Table **). While 64% of the sample would feel ashamed to leak menstrual blood on their clothing, 55% disagreed they hide the fact that they are menstruating, and 64% disagreed that they preferred not to talk openly about menstruation. Forty-five percent do not avoid touching themselves when menstruating; but the sample was split on whether they thought menstrual blood was disgusting, at 37% disagree/strongly disagree and 37% agree/strongly agree.

Menstruation as Disgusting and Shameful

I would feel ashamed if I "leaked" menstrual blood on my clothes.	7	15	14	34	30
I avoid touching my "private" area when I'm menstruating.	13	32	22	23	11
I'm embarrassed when I have to purchase menstrual products.	38	39	11	9	2
I prefer not to talk openly about menstruation.	24	40	20	13	3
When I have my period, I do things to hide the fact that I'm menstruating.	14	41	21	18	5
I find menstrual blood disgusting.	11	26	26	24	13

Table 7 Perimenstrual and Menstrual Symptoms

1. Please circle the number under the answers across the top to show how often you experience any of the following the WEEK BEFORE or DURING your period:				
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. Ability to concentrate better	4	20	37	39
b. Anger	29	46	16	10
c. Anxiety	22	39	21	18
d. Backache	32	36	18	14
e. Bloating	50	32	12	6
f. Breast tenderness	40	33	17	10
g. Cramps	51	31	12	6
h. Creativity	4	16	38	41
i. Depression	17	36	24	22
j. Desire for sex	26	36	19	19
k. Diarrhea	10	21	21	47
l. Dizziness	5	18	27	50
m. Extra energy	3	13	32	52
n. Fatigue	27	40	17	15
o. Feeling of power	3	13	30	54
p. Food cravings	36	38	13	13
q. Headaches	26	35	22	17
r. High spirits	2	21	38	38
s. Inability to focus on things	10	31	33	27
t. Irritability	43	38	11	8
u. Less energy	33	41	17	9
v. Moodiness	49	36	10	5
w. Pimples or acne	30	36	19	16
x. Sadness	21	36	25	19
y. Sense of joy	4	20	37	39
z. Other (write in)	1	2	3	4

Table 8

Some women experience more severe problems during their periods. Please circle how

often you have the following problems.				
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. Heavy bleeding	23	38	25	13
b. Really bad cramps	28	35	22	16
c. Anemia (low blood iron)	11	17	25	47
d. Any other severe problems (write in)				

Table 9

Please circle the number under your answer:					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. It's necessary to have a period every month.	11	22	17	38	12
b. I'd be interested in changing my period to make it less painful.	3	10	26	38	22
c. I'd be interested in changing my period to decrease problems I have during my period.	4	10	23	42	21
d. I'd be interested in not having a period every month.	7	17	16	32	27
e. I'd be interested in changing my current pattern to have lighter periods.	4	9	21	39	27

Table 10

How would you feel about using a birth control method that made your period stop for a certain amount of time?					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree

	Disagree				Agree
I'd be pleased.	8	15	18	33	26
It would make me anxious or worried.	12	22	23	35	9
It wouldn't be normal.	12	23	25	31	9
If I were sure it wouldn't hurt me, I'd do it.	4	9	17	43	26
I wouldn't use birth control for religious reasons.	44	28	19	5	3
I'd do this only for special occasions, like a vacation.	16	29	23	25	7
I'd use birth control to change my bleeding pattern.	7	16	23	40	14
I wouldn't even consider doing this.	32	32	23	7	6

Table 12

If you could choose how often you have a period, what would it be?
<input type="checkbox"/> Every month = 22%
<input type="checkbox"/> Every other month = 15%
<input type="checkbox"/> Every 3 months = 20%
<input type="checkbox"/> Every 6 months = 10%
<input type="checkbox"/> Never have a period = 32%

Table 13

Has PMS (premenstrual syndrome), your period, menstrual cramps, or other menstrual related symptoms ever caused you to miss (please check all that apply):	Never	Some-times	Many times

a. Work?	60	34	7
b. A party or other fun event?	47	43	10
c. Taking part in an athletic event?	49	41	10
d. Time with your friends or family?	61	32	7
e. Sex?	18	37	46

Table 14

Do you rely on your period to let you know (please check all that apply):
<input type="checkbox"/> If you're pregnant? 60% yes 40 no
<input type="checkbox"/> If you're able to have children? 22 yes 78 no
<input type="checkbox"/> If you're healthy? 37 yes 63 no
<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above.

Table 15

Have you ever used a birth control method for some reason other than to prevent pregnancy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes 38% yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (skip to question 15) 62%
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Table 16

2. If yes, please check other reasons you've used birth control (please check all that apply):
<input type="checkbox"/> Make periods more regular yes 58 no 42
<input type="checkbox"/> Stop periods yes 20 no 80
<input type="checkbox"/> Lessen menstrual symptoms (such as cramps or heavy bleeding) yes 55 no 45
<input type="checkbox"/> Get rid of acne (pimples) yes 29 no 71
<input type="checkbox"/> Other reason (write in):

Table 17

3. Some women use the birth control pill to delay or stop their periods. Have you ever used the pill to delay or stop your period for any amount of time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes 22% <input type="checkbox"/> No 78
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Table 18

Some health care professionals are telling women that it's not necessary to have a period every month and that it may even be harmful to women's health. A birth control pill is being developed that will let women have a period only 4 times a year.
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This is called *menstrual suppression*. The questions below ask what you think about this.

<p>4. Have you ever heard about menstrual suppression before?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes 27 <input type="checkbox"/> No (skip to question 19) 73</p>
<p>5. If yes, where did you get this information?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Family yes 7 no 93 <input type="checkbox"/> Friends yes 25 no 75 <input type="checkbox"/> Doctors or other health care providers yes 53 no 47 <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers or magazines 26 yes 74 no <input type="checkbox"/> Television 12 yes 88 no <input type="checkbox"/> Other (write in):</p>
<p>6. Has your doctor or other health care provider ever offered to write you a prescription for birth control pills so that you could skip your periods?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes 20 <input type="checkbox"/> No 80</p>

7. Please circle the number under your answer:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I think that stopping periods is a good idea.	7	22	27	28	15
b. Even if it were free and completely safe, I wouldn't be interested in stopping my periods.	24	38	16	17	5
c. I'm interested in learning more about this.	3	6	16	47	28
d. A lot more research should be done on this topic.	1	3	17	45	34
e. I'd be willing to try delaying or stopping my periods.	5	15	21	40	19
f. If my period disappeared, I wouldn't miss it.	4	15	14	33	34

g. It seems strange to argue that having a period every month could be harmful to women's health.	5	12	29	40	14
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8. How important is each of the following in deciding whether you'd be interested in delaying or stopping your period?

	Not important	Sort of important	Extremely important
a. The cost	23	43	34
b. The side effects	4	13	83
c. Long-term health effects	3	8	89
d. Ability to have children in the future	17	11	73
e. Other (write in):			

Health Care Provider Results

Attitudes Towards Menstruation Tool Menstruation as a Bothersome Event

	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neither	Agree or Strongly Agree
Menstrual periods are something women have to put up with.	41.27	22.42	36.11
Men have a real advantage in not having the monthly interruption of a menstrual period	14.32	26.67	59.02
I hope it will be possible someday to get a menstrual period over with in a few minutes.	26.32	35.76	37.91
The only thing menstruation is good for is to let women know they are not pregnant	59.13	21.22	19.65

Menstruation as a Natural Event

	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neither	Agree or Strongly Agree
Menstruation provides women a way to keep in touch with their bodies.	24.6	30.31	45.08
Menstruation is a reoccurring affirmation of womanhood.	29.65	32.02	38.34
Menstruation is an obvious example of the rhythmicity that pervades all of life	9.41	27.06	63.33
Menstruation is a natural process.	2.96	2.57	94.46

Menstruation as Disgusting, Shameful, or Disease State/Problem that Needs Treating

Menstruation should be kept secret.	87.4	10.24	2.36
Women feel ashamed if they “leak” menstrual blood on their clothes.	13.16	8.06	78.78
Menstrual blood is disgusting.	73.53	20.20	6.27
Monthly menstruation can be harmful to women’s health.	68.57	9.82	21.61
Women are more likely to commit violent crimes during their pre-menstrual period	47.64	34.25	18.11

Menstruation is a significant cause of absence from work or school for women	29.67	17.68	52.65
Women should abstain from sexual intercourse while menstruating	67.98	19.06	12.97
Menstruation should be treated like a disease	93.54	3.33	3.13

Have you ever prescribed a birth control method for some reason other than to prevent pregnancy?

Yes = 90.57

No = 9.04

9. If yes, please indicate other reasons you have prescribed birth control (you may check more than one): otherreas	
<input type="checkbox"/> Regulate menstrual cycle	96.13
<input type="checkbox"/> Suppress menstruation	67.89
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce menstrual symptoms	91.16
<input type="checkbox"/> Other reason (write in):	

Have you ever prescribed oral contraceptives to delay or stop a patient's period for any amount of time?

Yes = 70.34

No = 29.66

10. How long have you been prescribing a birth control method for some reason other than to prevent pregnancy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than a year	5.25
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1–3 years	21.05
	<input type="checkbox"/> 4–6 years	22.16
	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 6 years	47.37
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (write in)	5

11. Have you ever heard about menstrual suppression with extended use of oral contraceptives	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	81.03
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	18.97

12. If yes, where have you heard about this? (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Colleagues 67.96 <input type="checkbox"/> Journals 65.29 <input type="checkbox"/> CE programs 43.93 <input type="checkbox"/> Mailings from pharmaceutical companies 13.35 <input type="checkbox"/> Discussions with drug reps 19.42 <input type="checkbox"/> Patients 26.46 <input type="checkbox"/> Family/friends 9.47 <input type="checkbox"/> Television/radio 7.77 <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers or magazines 14.84 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (write in)
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	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Neither	Agree/Strongly Agree
a. I think that suppressing menstruation is a good idea	16.40	39.8	43.8
I would offer extended use contraceptives to all my patients on birth control pills. wouldoffer	30.28	20.52	49.2
I already offer extended use contraceptives to all my patients on birth control pills. alreadyoffer	55.34	22.54	22.14
It is physically necessary to have a period every month. mensnec	76.39	16.67	6.95
I would prescribe the extended use pills only for women with menstrual problems. probsonly	60.88	17.37	21.76
Long-term studies should be done on this topic. studies	6.16	6.16	87.67
I think it's important for a woman to have a period every month. mensimpt	62.9	26.39	10.72
I would offer extended use contraceptives to all my patients. wouldofferall	32.8	27.24	39.96

9. How important are the following items in influencing your decision to prescribe extended use oral contraceptives?			
	Not important	Sort of important	Extremely important
f. The cost	8.18	49.3	42.32
g. The side effects sideeffects	1.19	15.51	83.10
h. Long-term health effects	.8	8.35	90.66

longtermhea			
i. Future prospects of fertility childfut	2.85	10.79	86.15
j. Other (write in):			

10. Do your patients ask you about extended use of oral contraceptives? Ptsask	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes 42.54 <input type="checkbox"/> No 57.46
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11. Do you prescribe extended use of oral contraceptives for any of your patients? RXextd	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes 52.25 <input type="checkbox"/> No 47.52
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12. What factors affect your decision to prescribe extended contraceptive regimens? (Please check all that apply) factors	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient request 71.83 <input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle (offering to patients for avoiding menses for non-therapeutic reasons) 28.17
	Therapeutic reasons: <input type="checkbox"/> Endometriosis 76.53 <input type="checkbox"/> Dysmenorrhea 83.8 <input type="checkbox"/> Menorrhagia 80.52 <input type="checkbox"/> Other 6

13. <u>Age:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> 24 – 29 3.04 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 – 39 25.6 <input type="checkbox"/> 40 – 49 36.01 <input type="checkbox"/> 50 – 59 27.33 <input type="checkbox"/> 60 – 69 6.94 <input type="checkbox"/> 70 and older .87
14. <u>Degree:</u> (Please check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS/BSW 26 <input type="checkbox"/> MPH 3 <input type="checkbox"/> CNM 5 <input type="checkbox"/> DO 2.39 <input type="checkbox"/> MA/MS/MBA 35.79 <input type="checkbox"/> MD 13.32 <input type="checkbox"/> MSW .8 <input type="checkbox"/> NP 76.49 <input type="checkbox"/> PA .8 <input type="checkbox"/> PhD 2.58 <input type="checkbox"/> RN 36.78 <input type="checkbox"/> Other 9.54
15. <u>Race/ethnicity:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> European American (white) 86.62 <input type="checkbox"/> African American (black) 3.85 <input type="checkbox"/> Latin American (Hispanic) 1.83 <input type="checkbox"/> Asian American 3.85 <input type="checkbox"/> Native American/Alaskan .61 <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed .81 <input type="checkbox"/> Other 2.03
16. <u>Gender:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Female 89.94 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 10.06

 Research Team:

Site # _____

Participant # _____