

Insufficient menstrual cycle education provided in UK schools, study finds

April 26 2022



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Menstrual cycle education in U.K. schools is inconsistent and inadequate, and teachers feel they lack time, confidence, and subject knowledge, according to new research led by Swansea University.

Researchers conducted a survey of 789 U.K. primary and secondary school [teachers](#), 88% of which felt that periods affected pupils'

attendance, participation in exercise, as well as behavior and confidence.

The study, published in *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, found that only 53% of [secondary school teachers](#) reported that menstrual cycle [education](#) lessons were taught in their school. Of the teachers who were aware of their school's menstrual cycle syllabus across primary and [secondary schools](#), 144 reported that a maximum of two lessons were provided within one academic year.

90% of teachers that responded to the survey were female and almost one in four (23%) reported that they were uncomfortable teaching about the menstrual cycle, with many drawing on their own experiences, and less than half felt confident in their knowledge.

Funded by Sport Wales, the "Teachers' perceptions and experiences of menstrual cycle education and support in U.K. schools' study" is the latest stage of research into the impact of the menstrual cycle on female participation in sport.

Commenting on the study's findings, lead researcher Dr. Natalie Brown, of Swansea University, said: "I believe we have a long way to go when it comes to period education across the U.K. We face the danger of disadvantaging girls by failing to help them prepare, manage and understand physical and emotional symptoms when menstruating.

"It's integral that we support teachers to improve their confidence and knowledge of the menstrual cycle for [young people](#)—both boys and girls—to grow up feeling confident talking about this. It should no longer be a taboo subject. We need to reframe the narrative and normalize conversations about menstruation. This needs to happen among teachers, young people and their parents."

The study calls for improvements to be made to menstrual cycle

education for boys and girls across the U.K., including:

- Making time available for delivery, particularly to increase the regularity of teaching and lowering the age at which young people are first taught.
- Delivering resources for teachers to deliver information relating to emotional, social and physical aspects of the [menstrual cycle](#).
- Providing training support to teachers, with the minimum expectation for teachers to receive online professional development through e-learning and/or webinar.

Dr. Brown warns that schools need to urgently address the fact that many pupils missed out on learning about menstrual education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic: "The timing of this report means we must also highlight the impact of COVID-19. With the enforcement of home schooling during national lockdowns, there is a group of young people with significantly less menstrual education than previous years."

More information: Natalie Brown et al, Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences of Menstrual Cycle Education and Support in UK Schools, *Frontiers in Global Women's Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fgwh.2022.827365](#)

Provided by Swansea University

Citation: Insufficient menstrual cycle education provided in UK schools, study finds (2022, April 26) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-04-insufficient-menstrual-uk-schools.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.