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The common condition costing £531m a year in lost work days

--73% of women with heavy periods lie about the reason for taking days off, suggesting this common condition, which affects 1 in 5 women, is still a taboo --

London, UK October 11, 2017 - New survey results released today highlight the considerable impact and lack of awareness of heavy periods, which affect one in five women. That's over 4 million people in the UK.^{2,3} Women with heavy periods take 5,581,186 days off work every year¹⁻³ due to the impact of the condition, costing over £531 million.^{1,2,3,4} Heavy periods are a medical condition which can be treated, yet 73% admit to lying about their reason for taking time off work, with almost half (44%) preferring to cite diarrhoea as the cause.¹

Almost two thirds of women affected (62%) don't realise that heavy periods are a common medical condition (menorrhagia), with almost half (49%) of those who haven't spoken to their GP believing it to be "just part of being a woman".¹ Heavy periods also have a significant impact on physical health, with 74% of women surveyed experiencing anxiety, 69% depression and almost half (49%) reporting anaemia.¹

The research from heavy periods information site **Wear White Again** marks the launch of the new **Am I Number 5?** campaign, which aims to raise awareness and provide information on heavy periods; helping women understand whether they are '1 in 5' affected and encourage them to see their GP for help.

Broadcaster and blogger Katy Hill, 46, has been living with heavy periods since having children. "This research rang so true for me. I've never fully understood the apparent taboo over discussing periods and indeed heavy periods! Like most of the 1 in 5, I've always just accepted heavy periods as something that happens(?) and just got on with my busy life! But we don't have to just struggle on, missing days off work or time with our family and friends. Look for more information about heavy periods and talk to your GP. You owe it to yourself and to future generations of females! Let's get this conversation out there and break the ridiculous taboo."

The research amongst women with heavy periods also demonstrated how the condition affects wellbeing and quality of life:¹

- 58% have felt unable to carry out their daily routine
- 86% have bled through their clothes and 85% through their bedding
- 45% feel that their relationship with their partner is affected and over two thirds have missed out on romantic experiences (67%)
- almost a third of women (30%) have stopped playing a sport or a hobby for the duration of their period
- many are missing out on social events such as meals with friends (43%), family gatherings (31%) and weekends away or holidays (20%)

"Heavy periods do seem to be underreported - women don't realise that it's a medical condition and often don't feel comfortable talking about it. Whilst there are a number of potential causes of heavy periods, with an informed conversation, GPs can help diagnose and where relevant, talk through treatment options," commented media medic **Dr Dawn Harper**. "Educating yourself and providing GPs with as much information about your cycle and symptoms will help to address the issue as quickly as possible."

Heavy periods (menorrhagia) can be defined in a number of ways including:

- bleeding that lasts more than 7 days per cycle [\[5\]](#)
- bleeding so severe that a sanitary pad or tampon must be changed every hour for several hours in a row⁵
- heavy flow that keeps you from your normal activities, or even stops you from working [\[6\]](#)

Wear White Again is working with two charities, Endometriosis UK and Wellbeing of Women, to launch the **Am I number 5?** Campaign.

"Heavy periods are very common and have such an impact as the research shows. We welcome this initiative to educate women about the condition and its causes, one of which is endometriosis, as well as its focus on encouraging women to seek help from their GP," said Emma Cox, Chief Executive, Endometriosis UK.

Tina Weaver, Wellbeing of Women's CEO said, "Too many women suffer in silence with what are regarded as taboo issues. As Wellbeing of Women funds research to develop preventions, cures and treatments to help women and their babies, I am pleased to back a campaign highlighting a condition which affects 1 in 5 women, but is so rarely discussed."

As part of the **Am I Number 5?** campaign, people are being encouraged to paint one nail a different colour (to reflect the one in five statistic) and share a picture of their painted nails on their social media channels, using the hashtag **#aminumber5**. This will put a spotlight on heavy periods, helping millions of women across the UK and in turn raising money for Wellbeing of Women and Endometriosis UK – for each picture shared, a £1 donation will be made by Wear White Again.*

For further information about heavy periods and treatment options available visit www.wearwhiteagain.co.uk.

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* Up to £10,000

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References

[1] Opinium Research carried out an online survey from 28th July to 3rd August 2017 of 1002 women aged 18+ who currently experience menorrhagia / heavy periods or have previously experienced them within the last 3 years

[2] Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. National Heavy Menstrual Bleeding Audit (May 2011). Last accessed September 2017, available https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/research-audit/nationalhmbaudit_1stannualreport_may2011.pdf

[3] Based on women aged 14-60, Office for National Statistics: Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid 2016, datasets. Last accessed September 2017, available <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

[4] Based on median salary for women in the UK 2016, Office for National Statistics: Annual Survey for Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2016. Last accessed September 2017, available here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2016provisionalresults#gender-pay-differences>

[5] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Heavy menstrual bleeding (November 2016). Last accessed June 2017, available <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/blooddisorders/women/menorrhagia.html>

[6] Gallinat A. An impedance-controlled system for endometrial ablation: five-year follow-up of 107 patients. *J Reprod Med.* 2007;52(6):467-472

Additional assets available online:  [Video \(1\)](#)

<http://media.hologic.com/news-releases?item=123072>