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Breaking the period taboo: one in five women suffer from severe pain

A representative survey by Groupe Mutuel shows that approximately one in five Swiss women suffer from severe menstrual pain and that more than half of those surveyed take painkillers to help them cope. In addition, many women feel restricted in their daily lives during their periods. In particular, they may give up sports and sexual intercourse and choose to wear dark-coloured clothes.

Menstruation, periods, “that time of the month” or “a visit from Aunt Flo”... There are many words and expressions for menstruation, but periods are rarely spoken about. Although menstruation is part of women's everyday lives, little is known about what women go through at that time.

A representative survey by Groupe Mutuel shows that, on average, Swiss women have to endure moderate pain every month (5.16 on a scale of 1 to 10). One in five women suffers a lot, with a pain level of 8 or more. Among young women under 35, more than a quarter even report severe pain. As a result, more than half of the respondents take medication to relieve their pain. In addition, more than a third of them take painkillers frequently or even all the time, and this proportion rises to 40% among young women.

At home rather than at the gym

During their periods, many women feel restricted in their daily lives. Only 10% of them do not restrict themselves, while one fifth of them feel significantly or very significantly restricted. 60% of women give up certain activities during their period. The activities most often avoided are swimming and sexual intercourse (almost one in two) and sport (33%). Younger women and women from French-speaking Switzerland are the most likely to give up these activities. In addition, one in two women intentionally wears dark-coloured clothes at this time. This behaviour is also more prevalent among younger people and in the French and Italian speaking regions of Switzerland.

If women have questions about their periods, the vast majority of respondents (80%) contact their gynaecologist. Health professionals enjoy a good reputation, particularly among older women and in French-speaking Switzerland and Ticino. The second most popular source of information is the Internet (63%), which is preferred by young women (72%) and Swiss-German women. Among young women, it is also important to be able to talk about it with friends.

Menstruation has a negative connotation

Although a large proportion of women (86%) reported in the survey that they are not embarrassed to talk about their periods, they still associate menstruation with many negative terms, such as “painful”, “difficult” and “unpleasant”. The frequency with which these terms are used varies from region to region: while in German-speaking Switzerland a quarter of the respondents still associate menstruation with “femininity”, the proportion of French-speaking women who find it “annoying” and “unpleasant” is higher. However, pain is most frequently mentioned in all three language regions.

“We still know far too little about the specific concerns of women in the medical field. Only 4% of global health research funding is dedicated to women's health. With our start-up accelerator Tech4Eva, which we created together with the EPFL Innovation Park, as well as other initiatives, we want to make our contribution to the promotion of women's health”, explained Sophie Revaz, Head of Individual Benefits and Member of the Executive Board of Groupe Mutuel.



Media contact person

Loïc Mühlemann, Head Communications

Tel. 058 758 32 49, Mobile 079 797 86 69, lmuehlemann@groupemutuel.ch

About Groupe Mutuel

With over 2,800 employees throughout Switzerland, Groupe Mutuel is at the service of 1.36 million private customers and 28,000 companies.

As the only comprehensive insurer in Switzerland, Groupe Mutuel is the reference partner in the field of health and retirement benefits for private and corporate customers. Its overall turnover exceeds CHF 5.3 billion. Thanks to tailored solutions, whether in basic insurance (LAMal/KVG) or supplemental insurance (LCA/VVG), it is the third largest health insurer in Switzerland.

Groupe Mutuel also offers an extensive range of products in individual retirement benefits and patrimony insurance. Based in Martigny, the insurer provides companies of all sizes solutions with loss of earnings in the event of illness, accident insurance (LAA/UVG) and occupational pension plans (LPP/BVG). In the field of health insurance for companies, Groupe Mutuel is ranked fifth nationwide.