



Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: Menstrual health literacy and management of period pain in young Australian women

Project Summary:

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Dr Mike Armour, Professor Kath Holmes, Professor Caroline Smith, Associate Professor Tania Ferfolja, Dr Christina Curry, Dr Freya Macmillan and Kelly Parry (Research Assistant) from Western Sydney University. This study is designed to explore if using a web-site (that you can do on your computer, smartphone or tablet) can help improve your understanding of different symptoms you can have during your menstrual cycle (like pain or emotional changes), and to give you some self-care options including diet, yoga (stretching), heat and acupuncture, and see if these help reduce any period pain or other symptoms you might have.

How is the study being paid for?

This project is being jointly funded by U by Kotex (Kimberly Clark) and Western Sydney University.

Why is this study being done?

Young women in Australia don't usually have a very good understanding about their menstrual cycle and periods (called menstrual health literacy), because they don't get good information on what is 'normal' and often don't know when they should go and see their doctor to get their period related symptoms checked. Young women also don't always know the right self-care measures they can take to help reduce their period pain, such as taking pain killers (like ibuprofen) at the right time and in the right amount, and how other types of treatment, such as using heat, yoga or stretching and diet changes might help reduce pain and other symptoms.

A web-site has been designed by a group of experts in women's health, including gynaecologists, GPs and PDHPE teachers, along with various experts including dieticians and yoga instructors, to deliver information that should help improve your understanding on periods and the menstrual cycle.

This study aims to improve your understanding of your periods and your menstrual cycle, and to help give you some other tools (like heat and yoga stretches) to see if these can help you manage your periods better.

What will I be asked to do?

- You will be asked to fill in some questions about your age, which state/area you live in, your current health literacy and healthy behaviours (like exercise), some questions about your period pain (if any), what kind of medication you take and how regular your menstrual cycle is. All these forms can be filled in online, from your phone, tablet or computer.
- Once you've filled in this information you will be given a website link and password that you can go to which has information on your menstrual cycle, such as what 'normal' symptoms are, what causes period pain, or heavy bleeding and when you need to see your doctor to talk about these. These are all described both on the website and in short video clips.
- You will also be given a number of options on 'self-care'. These are things you can do without needing to go and see your doctor. These include information on some dietary changes you can make, how to best use heat, some yoga postures or stretches, as well as acupressure, where you press on certain places on your legs and feet. All of these treatments have been previously shown to help reduce menstrual pain. You will be asked to incorporate one or more of these practices into your lifestyle for the next three months. You will be able to choose which of these suits you best.
- You will get either a text message or email (your choice) on a regular basis (about once per week) to remind you to do these self-care practices.
- Each time you have a period for three months you will need to fill in a questionnaire each day you have bleeding, which just asks a question about how much pain you had, and if you took any analgesics (like Neurofen™). This will all be done online.
- At the end of the three months we will ask you the same types of questions as at the start, to see if anything has changed.
- After this has finished and only if you are interested, you can indicate if you'd like to give us more feedback as part of a focus group. This is totally optional.

How much of my time will I need to give?

- **Self-care web based resource**

- This will require participation in a 3-month program.
- You will be asked to interact with the self-care web based resource intervention in your own time, selecting and practicing the relevant self-care management options.

- We expect this could be as little as ten minutes per week (using acupressure), up to an hour per week if you decide to do yoga. Some things, such as heat, you might wish to use for several hours at a time during your period.

- **Questionnaires**

- It is estimated that the questionnaires completed before and after will take between 20 and 30 minutes. Taking up 40-60 minutes overall.
- The questionnaire tracking your level of pain and medication usage will take approximately 1 minute per day. This will be completed during the three menstrual cycles, taking around 15 minutes.

What benefits will I, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?

Using the web site will provide you with up-to-date, practical information and self-care that could reduce how much period pain you have. It might also reduce other symptoms like emotional changes such as feeling angry or sad (sometimes called PMS). It will also let you know if any of the menstrual symptoms you have need to be discussed further with your doctor or health professional.

Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for me? If so, what will be done to rectify it?

We do not foresee any risk to you when using the web-based information however; some of the topics and questions are personal in nature and relate to menstruation. If you do not wish to answer any specific question due to discomfort or personal preference, you can simply leave it blank or skip it. If this study has raised questions or concerns about your menstrual and pelvic pain there are helpful resources provided by the Pelvic Pain Foundation of Australia at <http://www.pelvicpain.org.au/information>. If you wish to speak to a counsellor you can contact Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, 24 hours a day.

The use of the self-care interventions; such as heat, stretching/yoga, and acupressure are all low risk. If you are concerned about undertaking gentle physical activity, such as yoga stretches, please consult your health care professional prior to undertaking this study. The use of heat (such as a hot water bottle) can carry a risk of burns if used at too high a temperature or for too long. Strategies to reduce this risk are discussed in the web-based

resource. Acupressure carries a very small risk of causing a bruise at the location of the pressure point if pressure is applied too firmly. Guidance is provided in the resources on how to ensure the correct pressure.

How do you intend to publish or disseminate the results?

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums, including to PDHPE teachers, academic journals and conferences. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that the participant cannot be identified.

Will the data and information that I have provided be disposed of?

Please be assured that only the researchers will have access to the raw data the participant will provide and that your data will not be used in any other projects. We will keep your data for at least five years after we publish our findings. The data and information you have provided will be securely disposed of.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and participants are not obliged to be involved. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without giving reason. Whatever the decision, it will not affect the participant's medical treatment or your relationship to anyone involved in this study.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with Kelly Ann Parry's (Research Assistant) details. You can then contact Kelly Ann Parry to discuss your participation in the research project and obtain a copy of the information sheet.

What if I require further information?

Please contact Kelly Ann Parry should you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether or not to participate

Kelly Ann Parry, Research Assistant, email kelly.parry@westernsydney.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Research Engagement, Development and Innovation (REDI) on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 or email humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree for the participant to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Consent Form. The information sheet is for you to keep and the consent form is retained by the researcher/s.

This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H12599.