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Women's preferences for menstrual bleeding frequency: results of the Inconvenience Due to Women's Monthly Bleeding (ISY) survey.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: Our aim was to assess the level of inconvenience associated with monthly bleeding, determine how many women would prefer a bleeding frequency of less than once a month, and what would motivate their choice.

METHODS: A 15-min quantitative online survey was carried out among 2883 women aged between 18 and 45 years in six European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Poland and Spain).

RESULTS: Of those surveyed, 1319 women used a combined hormonal contraceptive (CHC group) and 1564 used a non-hormonal contraceptive or no contraceptive (non-HC group). The menstrual period was significantly longer (5 vs. 4.5 days), heavier (16% vs. 8% heavy menstrual flow) and associated with more symptoms (6.1 vs. 5.6) in non-HC users than in CHC users ($p < 0.0001$). More than half of the women in each group reported pelvic pain, bloating/swelling, mood swings and irritability, but the rate was significantly higher in the non-HC group. Given the choice, 57% of women in both groups said they would opt for longer intervals between periods. Sexuality, social life, work and sporting activities were key factors affecting their decision.

CONCLUSIONS: The majority of women would prefer to have menstrual periods less than once a month, with a frequency ranging from once every 3 months to no periods at all. This can be explained by the desire to avoid the unpleasant aspects of menstruation and its negative impact on private and professional life.

KEYWORDS: Attitudes; menstrual bleeding; menstrual symptoms; oral contraception; preferences

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