CODE RED

Heavy Menstrual Bleeding in the Netherlands • 2025 Research

Using data collected from 3,547 people took part, with 2,512 responses collected nationally and 991 from Amsterdam, **Neighborhood Feminists** and research firm **Opinium** carried out a study on menstruation in the Netherlands, focusing on the scale and impacts of period poverty and **heavy menstrual bleeding**.

Heavy Menstrual Bleeding (HMB) is the medical condition of excessively heavy or prolonged periods that interfere with physical, emotional, and social well-being. Despite its prevalence, most people with HMB don't seek medical help due to societal stigma and a lack of accessible information about its diagnosis and treatment. The silence imposed by stigma leaves people struggling in isolation, and perpetuates a costly lack of understanding and inadequate care.

Research findings

Using the 2023 population data from CBS for women and girls aged 15-49, our CODE RED research estimates:

OVER 1,000,000 PEOPLE IN THE NETHERLANDS EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTIES RELATED TO HEAVY MENSTRUAL BLEEDING (HMB) IN THE PAST YEAR.

Of these, 350,000 also experienced period poverty, struggling to or unable to afford the period products they need.

Respondents with HMB struggle with additional symptoms during menstruation:

- **72% experiencing extreme tiredness**
- **71% experiencing constant pain/dysmenorrhea**

SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH IMPACTS

HMB leads to higher expenses for menstrual products, medications, and as shown in multiple studies, if unaddressed, means significant additional costs in health care for the individual and government. HMB significantly disrupts daily routines, from work and school to personal relationships, leading to feelings of shame and frustration.

Among those experiencing HMB and period poverty:

- 33% see an impact on their mental health
- 32% have to change their daily routine
- 31% have to stay home for some of their period
- 28% see an impact on their physical health
- 27% miss out on socializing

NOTABLY: 16% MISS SCHOOL DAYS & 19% MISS WORK.

BARRIERS TO SEEKING MEDICAL HELP

Despite the many negative impacts and existing guidelines for diagnosis and treatment of HMB, the percentage of individuals in the Netherlands actually seeking medical assistance remains low, with most asking for advice from people close to them.

ONLY 34% OF THOSE WITH HEAVY MENSTRUAL BLEEDING HAVE SOUGHT TREATMENT FROM HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.

Respondents, regardless of socio-economic status, experience the effects of menstrual **stigma**. Multiple recent research studies confirm misconceptions and lack of awareness among healthcare providers further hamper access to the care people need.

In line with guidelines set by medical professionals, the following symptoms can indicate HMB:

- FLOODING CLOTHING OR BEDDING
- FREQUENT CHANGES OF SANITARY PADS OR TAMPONS (every 2 hrs or less, or 12 or more products per 24 hrs)
- NEED FOR DOUBLE PROTECTION OF MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS
- BLOOD CLOTS LARGER THAN A 50-CENT COIN

GO TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD FEMINISTS WEBSITE FOR THE FULL REPORT OR PRACTICAL RESOURCES ON HEALTHY MENSTRUATION AND TRACKING PERIODS

NEIGHBORHOOD FEMINISTS

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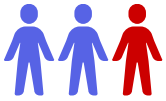
Heavy Menstrual Bleeding in the Netherlands • 2025 Research

Heavy menstrual bleeding (HMB) is defined as **excessively heavy/prolonged periods that interfere with physical, emotional, and social well-being**. Despite its prevalence, many people with HMB don't seek medical help due to stigma and a lack of information – all of which (like period poverty) **negatively impacts individuals and the economy**.



One in three people who menstruate in the Netherlands experiences heavy menstrual bleeding

Recommendations

People with heavy menstrual bleeding (HMB) in the Netherlands face significant challenges, with negative impacts on their education, work, and social lives.

To effectively address **MENSTRUAL ACCESS & EQUITY, MENSTRUAL EDUCATION and MENSTRUAL RESEARCH,** *we call for:*

- ***Increasing awareness***

Breaking the silence around HMB by normalizing conversations about menstruation in schools, workplaces, and media.

- ***Changing policy***

Advocating for government support to improve access to menstrual products and needed healthcare services in the Netherlands.

- ***Improving training for medical providers***

Ensuring healthcare providers in the Netherlands are equipped to recognize and treat HMB with empathy and expertise.

- ***Sharing practical resources***

Our online resources include a user-friendly information sheet to help navigate conversations with medical professionals.

This range of targeted measures involves everyone, from members of **national and local government**, **medical professionals and members of medical associations**, to **researchers and educators**, as well as the **general public**. Together, we can ensure that everyone has access to the care, understanding, and support they deserve.

For a more in-depth look at our recommendations, go to our website for the **downloadable CODE RED report**.

Why does visibility matter?

By sharing needed information, findings & recommendations we can reach the many living with HMB - and those in a position to make a real difference - to together:

- Break the cycle of silence and stigma
- Better support individuals with HMB
- Build momentum for improvements in healthcare and health-related policy

OPEN & INCLUSIVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MENSTRUATION ARE THE FOUNDATION OF NEEDED CHANGE

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