

# PERIOD PRODUCTS AND THE PANDEMIC: FINDINGS FROM AN ONLINE SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN'S DURING LOCKDOWN

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## **Background:**

Periods do not stop in a pandemic. Access to pads, tampons and other products to manage periods safely, hygienically and comfortably are vital to the health and wellbeing of people who menstruate. In early 2020, Australia experienced a nation-wide lockdown to help stop the spread of COVID-19. We examined the impact of the lockdown on the ability of people to access their usual period products.

## **Methods:**

We conducted an online survey during the first nation-wide lockdown that was open from the 23<sup>rd</sup> April – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020. People aged 18+ who were living in Australia were eligible to participate. Here we focus specifically on responses to questions regarding access to period products, and participants who identified as female and were aged <50 years. We fitted univariable and multivariable logistic regression models to explore factors associated with difficulty accessing period products and utilised a conventional content analysis for the free-text qualitative data.

## **Results:**

Of the 410 participants included in this analysis, most were employed (60.2%), well-educated (71.3% reported further education and/or training), and were from metropolitan areas (77.5%), with nearly half living in Victoria (53.3%). Nearly one third reported difficulties accessing their usual period products during lockdown, and nearly half of these reported changing their use of products as a result. Women under 25 years were more likely to experience difficulty accessing products. Free-text comments revealed the ways in which women handled this, often purchasing whatever was available regardless of whether it was a product that met their needs or not.

## **Conclusion:**

People do not stop menstruating in a pandemic. Being cognisant of issues related to accessing sexual and reproductive health products and services, including period products, and the inclusion of mitigating strategies in responses to global emergencies like COVID-19, is essential.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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