Participant 25

Duration: 36.18 minutes

Participant: Dysmenorrheic girl (14 years old)

Interviewer: OK (name) Could you start off by telling me a bit about please?

Participant: Erm… (pause)

Interview: So, what type of things do you do at school?

Participant: Um, at school I like doing art and in my like main subjects like English and Maths and I like doing food tech.

Interviewer: That’s good, what type of things do you cook in food tech?

Participant: Um, anything like pastries…

Interviewer: That’s good, I don't know how to cook pastries...

Participant: (laughs)

Interviewer: Erm how old are you?

Participant: 14

Interviewer: OK and do you do any like extracurricular activities or hobbies wise?

Participant: No, I don’t really… (laughs)

Interviewer: No, OK- what types of things do you do in your spare time then?

Participant: Usually meet up with friends or just sit in with my family or go out somewhere with them.

Interviewer: OK erm so and can you tell me a bit about who’s at home, who lives at home?

Participant: Erm, my brother lives here, my mum and dad and sister erm, my brothers girlfriend usually comes and spends the night a couple of days and then my boyfriend comes round as well. Then, we did have a dog but he got put down so… it’s a bit… that’s what I used to do in my spare time, spend time with the dog.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s a shame- sorry to hear that. Um, so you mentioned about your boyfriend- how long have you been with your boyfriend?

Participant: Since the 25th March (laughs)

Interviewer: OK, OK, erm so how old is he?

Participant: 16 (laughs)

Interviewer: OK and how about, you mentioned seeing your friends and things like that, what type of things do you do when you go out with your friends?

Participant: Um we either like, we go round theirs and we watch films or we go to the park or we’d go to the shop of the cinema, just something to keep us entertained.

Interviewer: OK, sounds good, um can you tell me a bit about your periods and when did they start and things like that?

Participant: Um, I remember I first came on on the Queen’s jubilee and I couldn’t move and I had really bad pains. My mum had to sort of help me up the stairs because I couldn’t move, but as the year’s gone on, it’s like, in a way it’s gotten worse but then I have like good months so, like not, not the other day when you called but the month before that was pretty good so erm this month is really bad, the first couple of days I had school, so it was Monday and Tuesday, I was literally on the toilet I couldn’t move, like really bad pains, I had to have my paracetamol and ibuprofen every time and my hot water bottle with me and just sleep it off and erm yeah but every time it was time to have another one I had to go to the toilet and then Wednesday I had this, I had the day off to see if I was alright to go back on the Thursday… cause I, I, when I’m on I’m either really lightheaded, I basically faint and I’ve got low blood pressure so it doesn’t help (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah, OK… could you describe how the pain feels?

Participant: A really sharp pain sort of, I don’t know really how to describe it, I don’t know… it isn’t so bad that you can’t… I dunno…

Interviewer: It’s OK, it’s OK, if you can’t describe it…

Participant: It’s like all over the thing, really, really bad sometimes.

Interviewer: OK and like does it, can you tell me a bit about the timeline of it so does it start before the period starts or…

Participant: As soon as I come on.

Interviewer: OK, so at the same time?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Interviewer: OK, and how long does it last for? Does it last for the whole period?

Participant: Erm, usually the 3 days that I’m on heavy and then the other two it’s usually gone. But yeah…

Interviewer: OK and is it the same every month? You said that every now and then you get an alright…

Participant: Yeah, erm it’s like every month but it’s like I can have two good months and then it’s really bad again, it’s because I’m actually getting up and doing stuff it sort of…

Interviewer: (wind blows paper off the table) oh, oh… OK so you mentioned about the fainting, are there any other symptoms that…

Participant: I sometimes shake because I know I’m going to pass out, but I think, I think that’s all, just like my legs hurt and that’s why I start shaking.

Interviewer: OK (pause). Yeah, you mentioned that your first period was really bad…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: How has it changed from then like is it always kind of like the same, does it still feel like that same pain now?

Participant: Yeah, the same pain yeah

Interviewer: OK, is it still as intense?

Participant: Hmmm… sort of… hmm

Interviewer: Kind of?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK so like can you tell me about when the pain is worse or better? So can you tell me like the differences between when you have the good months and when you have the bad months?

Participants: Um, on the bad months, the pain usually starts in the morning and I take a paracetamol and as soon as I take an ibuprofen, and then it sort of kicks in again, when, they come, it’s like every 4 hours or two hours, I need to take another tablet.. the pain comes back, so on my good months I don’t have any pain at all, just have to like take a paracetamol here and there just to…

Interviewer: Yeah. And what other types of things do you do to reduce the pain? So you said about paracetamol and ibuprofen…

Participant: Erm hot water bottles or Wheaties..

Interviewer: Or what sorry?

Participant: Wheaties… they’re like, there basically the same as hot water bottles and you just put them in the microwave and it warms them up… they’re like…

Interviewer: Oh, I know, they’ve got those little balls in them..

Participant: Yes that’s it, yeah

Interviewer: Ah, I know yeah.

Participant: I couldn’t think what they’re called

Interviewer: Yeah I don’t know either (laughs)

Participant: (laughs)

Interviewer: Anything else you do to kind of… so tell me about a typical day, you wake and you have pain, what would be the first thing you would do to get rid of it?

Participant: Take paracetamol

Interviewer: OK and does that always work?

Participant: It usually takes like 10 or 15 minutes to kick in but it’s…. yeah (hears family in the background)…. Yeah. If it’s really bad I go up to my mum…I make sure I’m sorted out before I go up there but usually she tells me to get back in bed with a hot water bottle, yeah and it’s that bad that I have to have time off school. I’ve had to.

Interviewer: Is that every month? (pause) are your periods regular?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: So is this happening every month?

Participant: Yeah, every so often I have a missed month or two …

Interviewer: OK so have you been to the doctors about the pain?

Participant: No, hmm I dunno, I don’t think so…. I can’t remember…. I don’t think mum’s took me yet but um I did have these little tablets to take away the pain as well, I can’t think what they’re called but my mum got it from her friend that does kind of things so…

Interviewer: Did it work?

Participant: Yeah, I used to feel much better after that

Interviewer: OK, OK, so can you tell me why you’ve not been to the doctors yet?

Participant: Mum ust hasn't had time to take me yet cause where she’s, she makes flowers she just…

Interviewer: OK, that’s fair enough, erm, and so can you tell me about… you talk to your mum… is there anyone else in the family that you can speak to when…

Participant: Erm I usually talk to them or I talk to my boyfriend about it, he’s usually the.. sometimes I talk to my brothers girlfriend and yeah um or my auntie…

Interviewer: What about your dad or your brother?

Participant: No, I won’t, he won’t do anything- all he does is give me a hug (laughs)

Interviewer: Aw

Participant: My brother is usually, he won’t talk about it… he’s like (pulls face)

Interviewer: OK, can you tell me, you said about, you have to take a lot of time off school erm can you tell me about when you first like, when you first started… has that changed at all?

Participant: Um, I think when I first started coming on I used to go to school just like normally, it’s as I’m older that I’m taking time off school because I’m having bad pain and that, I remember I used to do a lot of things when I first came on like in year 7 I used to go round my friend’s house and I used to have bad pain and feel light headed but I still went.

Interviewer: Yeah, and what do you think’s changed like that’s made you take more time off?

Participant: Well I don’t know, maybe it’s because I’m growing or something and hormones changing.

Interviewer: OK, and do you feel that the pains is worse?

Participant: No, well I think it’s gotten worse just a bit as I’ve gotten older.

Interviewer: OK, OK and erm so can you tell me… you know you said when you first started you did still go to school… can you tell me a bit about what a typical day at school would be like if you went in and you had pain?

Participant: Well I had pain and I usually would have to wait until break to go to the nurse if it, like if it was really bad I had to go during lessons but like the breaks we had between the lessons, it’s usually that’s when I usually go to the nurse or I usually ask to leave just before everyone takes…. Because I used to keel over- that was in year 7, now I just got on my own…

Interviewer: How were the teachers with you?

Participant: Um, some of the them just don’t understand at all, that’s including the women teachers. Erm like my art teacher understands, well she sort of knows mum so it’s… my maths teacher, my English teacher sort of let me go out because like I go really pale. My PE, one of my other PE teachers let me go out and my geography teacher does as well.

Interviewer: What about the teachers that don’t? Do you still ask…

Participant: Yeah, I still ask them but they just don’t let me go even if I feel like I’m gonna faint they just don’t..

Interviewer: Do you tell them why it is… that it’s to do with periods…

Participant: Yeah but some of them just don’t… (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah… and how about the school nurse?

Participant: Yeah, she knows my brother and my mum so she… both of them know, both of the nurses know…

Interviewer: That’s good

Participant: They know how to deal with me and that.

Interviewer: And what do they do if you go to the nurse?

Participant: They usually call my mum and ask the, what to do and then after they’ve done that they usually tell them to come and pick me up because I’m either in tears or I’ve come there to say I’m gonna faint.

Interviewer: The feeling like you’re gonna faint… is that because you’re in so much pain or is that just another thing…

Participant: Um both

Interviewer: Both, OK… and is that always at the same time, the pain and the fainting?

Participant: Yeah and I don’t, I usually don’t eat much either, only at dinner, that’s the only time I eat and the rest of the time I don’t I just snack on things

Interviewer: Is that because of the pain?

Participant: Yeah, I don’t wanna move or anything… once you get comfortable you just want to stay there

Interview: How about now like are there any times when you don’t go into school, you just stay at home in the morning?

Participant: Yes that’s what happened last week on Monday, I was in a lot of pain and I couldn’t move at all.

Interviewer: And the school, do you tell them that’s why? That it’s because of periods and stuff?

Participant: Mum usually calls in and tells them that I’m not well but I don’t know if she tells them, I don’t know what she tells them really.

Interviewer: Are they OK about it?

Participant: I think so, I’m not sure, the school is just, nah they don’t understand.

Interviewer: Yeah. And why do you think that is… that people don’t understand it?

Participant: I dunno, it’s just like the male teachers they don’t understand and where I have a male as my headteacher, he sort of wants everyone in school, he wants high… high… he wants his school to be perfect and that but yeah I also got bullied in the past as well so like I’d been on and bullies used to annoy me and do something and it’s just like and… and I used to turn to my cousins for it but they turned against me as well so it’s like I’ve only got (boyfriend) and a few of my friends to turn to so…

Interviewer: Is that your boyfriend?

Participant: Yeah (laughs)

Interviewer: OK so what, do the people who pick on you and bully you, do they know that you’re in a lot of pain..

Participant: Yeah, cause my cousin used to help me through it cause they’re the only family in my school at the moment so, I aint got a lot of people to turn to because of what’s happened and where we had a massive falling out when I was on, and I was, you’re moody because I felt like I was gonna faint and it just….

Interviewer: OK so… can you tell me a bit more about that so… what happened…

Participant: Yeah, ever since I started school erm one of my cousins, my eldest cousin, he’s in year 10, the other one is in year 8, and ever since I started I hung around with him because I didn't know anyone else so he would help me and I got, he thought it was alright to bully me and he’s been doing it right the way through to now.

Interviewer: This is your cousin?

Participant: My cousin’s friend. And yeah last year me and my cousin had a massive falling out and it was because the bully got one of my good mates together with (my cousin) and it’s of… I was shocked because he just done it and he sort of, a surprise and I kicked off because he started spending more time with her when I’d been going through a lot recently and last year and year 7, lots happened, my other dog got put down in year 7 and then my uncle died… great uncle and all this and then last year, this year it all kicked off, we had a massive argument, my mum and my cousin’s mum aren’t talking, it’s all gone, it’s like every time I’m not in school I go to pick (sister) up and because I just want to get out and have fresh air because when I go outside in the fresh air I sort of feel better and I just get the glares thinking why you not at school and all that.

Interviewer: That sounds really difficult…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Have you spoken to anyone about you know, that you’re having a hard time at school…

Participant: Yeah I talk to my mum and my mum’s friends and yeah

Interviewer: OK so you have a support network outside… OK and how about any teachers?

Participant: Um yeah, I talk to my art teacher and my um head of year’s assistant, I used to talk to her about everything but she just hasn’t done anything about any of it so I’m just going to different teachers now. Now I’ve been going to different teachers and telling them, they’re sort of helping me and putting, and instead of, the assistant, where the, it’s like year 8, 9, and year 10 and it’s like sort of different year groups and they have to get the bullying done than anything else because they’re not good with bullying.

Interviewer: OK, so, it’s good that you’re being proactive I think. And like it’s good that you’ve spoken to people about it and that people know. How about your friendship group, you said you’ve got a friend…

Participant: Yeah, I’ve lost a few as well so… because of the whole thing… and over half, over Easter I had a falling out with another one and I’ve got 3, 4 of them and I’ve got some of my boyfriend’s friends as well so it’s like, I’ve got a few to turn to.

Interviewer: Do you talk to all of them if you’re having a month when you’ve got really bad pain…

Participant: Yeah I usually find them or I just tell them.. and I just sit down and do nothing.

Interviewer: Erm and so do you… so do you take time off school every, with every period… like a day off or…

Participant: Yeah, yeah every period really

Interviewer: Yeah, OK and is that always due to the pain or…

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about that…

Participant: I don’t know why, it’s, I think it’s just like where I’m not eating a lot and that, and when I do it’s just all (laughs) yeah…

Interviewer: Yeah, OK, Yeah. Does that impact on, if you do go to school, do you ever have that when you’re at school?

Participant: I’ve had that once at school, I just can’t be stuck on the toilet all day and other people are in the toilet… it’s just embarrassing.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So can you tell me a little bit more, you’ve got your friendship group

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Does it ever impact on what you do with your friends? Like you said that you like to…

Participant: Yes, erm I made some plans the other day with one of my friends and I came on really bad and I had to cancel because I was so bad and I just couldn't…. I went ice skating when I was on and that was a good one so I like, Friday, on the Thursday I had an academic view at school so I was walking around and then… Friday I did something I think I just went for a walk round the block, just to get some fresh air, Saturday I went to my nans so I’m getting up and Sunday I got out and done ice skating and then just trying to forget about it so…

Interviewer: Do you find that helps trying to..

Participant: Yeah, kind of, yeah

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah OK and is there anything else that you do to try and take your mind off it?

Participant: I usually just go out in the garden and walk around or just sit out here…

Interviewer: Yeah, it’s a nice garden. Anything else? Like films or….

Participant: Oh yeah sometimes I watched TV or watch films

Interviewer: Does it help?

Participant: Sometimes, it depends if it’s a good film, cause like some films I don’t get interested in and I’m bored but some films like action films I get into and I’m like, and like chick flicks… (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs) yeah. Is there anything else like with your friends that, has it ever affected your relationships with any of them… so if you feel in pain… or your boyfriend…

Participant: Erm, no I don’t think so, (boyfriend helps me with things, he helps me get my paracetamol and all that and tries to tell me to go to sleep (laughs) and erm my friends they just usually keep an eye on me if I faint and that so that’s it really, cause sometimes like I go round one of my friends houses all the time, me and her usually come on at the same time… there’s one, two actually… three! Three yeah, we all come on around the same time so it’s like we’re the same… but yeah they usually have good months and no pain and then there’s me with the pain and not feeling so good and not wanting to go to school…

Interviewer: OK and you mentioned catching up at school… can you tell me- is that difficult?

Participant: Um yes in a way because like, for example the last week on Thursday and Friday I had to catch up on my maths and English and first day back on Thursday I had to ask my English teacher, I had him for the whole lesson helping me, like done the first 10 minutes or whatever with the class then I had him for the rest of the time because I just didn’t know what I was doing but I got, I caught up quick, I knew what I was doing by the end of the lesson so….

Interviewer: That’s good, that’s good. And how do you feel, how to you feel about it?

Participant: I don’t know…

Interviewer: It’s OK if you don’t know, it’s fine

Participant: Yeah I don’t know… So it’s like, I wish you could just do it at home, because like working just do it at home.

Interviewer: Erm and can I ask, you said sometimes your boyfriend says just go to sleep… does it affect how you sleep then?

Participant: Um, I usually get comfortable and he’s like, he’s like a teddy bear and I just, I just fall asleep on him and if I’m like cuddled up next to him, I’m out, I’m out cold like he usually like cuddles up to me and he usually takes, takes my mind off the pain so I’m not really in pain anymore so yeah, it’s pretty good.

Interviewer: Yeah and erm, how about exercise or sports or anything like that?

Participant: (laughs) I can’t really do much at school, I do, I do a lot of walking, because I walk home and I have PE at school but I have like a bad toe, I have an in-growing toe-nail so when I’ve got that, it’s like restricting me to do certain things and it’s getting worse now and it’s like I don’t want to do it because it’s getting worse and it’s really painful as well.

Interviewer: OK, yeah so before you had that, did period pain stop you…

Participant: I’ve had it since I started (laughs), it was on that foot, my left foot and then it went to my right foot.

Interviewer: OK and have you been to the doctor about it?

Participant: Yeah I’ve been thinking about going back to the person who did this foot (points to left foot) because I had an operation on this one and it’s all better now so I’ll have it on that one. That one’s getting like that one used to (laughs)

Interviewer: Right OK yeah…

Participant: I do like doing PE when I can

Interviewer: How about things like swimming?

Participant: I still do swimming and that… I, yeah, I try and get out and that, I just don’t like people looking, I hate showing my legs but where I’m starting to everything and all that and just, just get my legs out…

Interviewer: Trying to be confident?

Participant: Yeah I know I’m really pale but oh well (laughs)

Interviewer: You’re fine! (laughs).. you can use fake tan it’s fine (laughs)

Participant: (laughs)

Interviewer: And how about like sleepovers and stuff, do you still go and…

Participant: Yes, I had one last night, first time (boyfriend) came along and I had another friend as well so… we were in my room.

Interviewer: OK and would it stop you ever having someone over or sleeping pver someone elses house?

Participant: Erm, it usually stops me sleeping over theirs but I usually want them to come over cause if something happens you just want to be home so you know… you know where everything is and mum’s there as well cause I had it when I came on my period at a friends house and I had to go home cause it was that bad. I was in so much pain.

Interviewer: What happened then? Can you tell me a bit about that?

Participant: Erm it was all going alright, I was looking after her little brother and sister with her, they’re little toddlers and um, I literally, I, I said I needed a toilet cause I drank a lot, it was in the summer… and I just couldn’t get off the toilet, I was stuck. I managed to sort myself out and I just literally sat down in the toilet lid and I was crying and I said (friend) I need to go home.

Interviewer: And was she OK about that?

Participant: Yeah, she’s done it to me before so… she said it’s fine, I’ve done it so… but her mum sort of, she understands I suffer badly but like she said just try and forget about it and all that and I was like it’s too hard. I do try.

Interviewer: Yeah. Sorry, I’m going back…

Participant: It’s fine

Interviewer: You haven’t been to the doctors but do you want to go to the doctors about it? Have you thought about…

Participant: I haven’t really thought about it but I don’t know what they’d do, it’s just period pain so I don’t know if they can do anything about it.

Interviewer: OK and can I ask about family life, you said you spend quite a lot of time with your family…

Participant: Yeah it sometimes does, cause like we book, like do days out and it sort of affects it cause like I don’t like walking far and like I did it the other day when I was on and I was on heavy and we went for a walk and I felt better but it literally, it’s not nice because you can feel it and….

Interviewer: And is that the pain or is that as well being very heavy… both…. OK and the fainting as well, does that impact on whether…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK and how are your family if you…

Participant: Yeah usually like my dad takes my sister out or my mum will take my sister out or something and they do something but I’m in bed trying to get better, trying to get rid of the pain. They do do things and stuff without me cause I usually suffer badly.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that when they…

Participant: Um, I do feel a bit left out but I literally, when I just don’t feel well, I just don’t want to do anything.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s fair enough. How about things like family holidays or like do you guys go away…

Participant: Yeah we’ve not been away for a few years, like 6, 7 years, what’s happened in the past… but we’re going on one in June, and that’s around when I’m due on so it’s gonna be like… hopefully I’ll come on at the end of this month so that’ll be fine hopefully.

Interviewer: Is that something that you’ve, have you been worried about that?

Participant: Yeah I’ve only found out, Ive only know for a couple of weeks now so

Interviewer: OK… where you going?

Participant: (location)

Interviewer: Oh very nice, have a good time

Participant: Yeah thanks (laughs)

Interviewer: OK so, do you know the cause of period pain and what… like

Participant: No, I know nothing about it, just when you learn about it in science or sex education you don’t go over it much so they just, just skip it, they tell you all about the hormones and how it happens but that’s all, they don’t tell you about the pain or anything.

Interviewer: OK, do you think that if they had, it might, you know that you would have liked that?

Participant: Yeah, if they did teach us it cause like some people do suffer badly so I think we all want to know why

Interviewer: OK, and how about like future expectations, do you know, do you think it will go and as you get older it’ll get better or…

Participant: I don’t know cause I’m like my mum so I suffer badly so hopefully it will get better when I get older but I’ve gotten older and it’s sort of getting worse so… I think it’s only because I’m still getting used to it where I’ve only been on for a couple of years whereas my mum’s had a bit longer so it’s…. yeah

Interviewer: Yeah hopefully. OK and how about how you feel about yourself, does it impact on how you feel…

Participant: It usually makes me have loads of spots and, as you can see now, (laughs) and also the stress as well and like I’m trying to get good grades in school and it’s hard when you’re bullied and then you’re on your monthlies, it sort of affects it and….

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about how it affects….

Participant: So when I have pain I usually take… my mind usually goes straight to I’ve got pain, I need to do something about it and I usually drift away in lessons, I don’t pay attention you know and the faint starts, I’ll begin to start to faint and that’s annoying but yeah I usually pay less attention than normal. I just wanna go.

Interviewer: Yeah and how about homework and stuff?

Participant: Erm yeah I usually do that when I’m better sit on my chair and do it or in bed.

Interviewer: Um OK. I think we’ve covered everything yeah. Is there anything that we haven’t talked about that you’d like to talk about? Anything in addition that it impacts that I’ve not asked about or…

Participant: I can’t think of anything but erm the one thing that’s been on my mind is that there’s this thing inside you or something that, when you period or whatever, and obviously that’s not good, cause one of my friends told me and I said I don’t think that sounds right, that didn’t sound like it’s, it’s just been on my mind since and I don’t know if it’s true or not so I’ve just been thinking about cause it’s a weird thing to bring up when… in PE (laughs) and I usually don’t do PE and she just brings it up and I’m like OK then erm.

Interviewer: OK did she suggest that maybe that’s what you…

Participant: Yeah she said her mum had, I think she’s done so she went to the doctors about it and yeah I think that might be, I don’t know.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel when someone says something like that?

Participant: It gets me a little bit worried cause like the tiniest bit but like usually I’ll take my mind off it and try not to.. try and take the pain down.

Interviewer: OK… anything else?

Participant: I can’t think of anything?

Interviewer: OK well thank you so much (name), I’m just going to stop this (points to the recorder).