Participant 11 (7) Duration: 27.04

Dysmenorrheic girl (16 years old)

Interviewer: OK, so can you start off by telling me a bit about yourself?

Participant: Oh erm, OK my name is (name), erm Im 16, it’s my birthday next week

Interviewer: Mhmm

Participant: Erm, I’m in sixth form, year 12

Interviewer: OK, what lessons do you, what topics to you study?

Participant: Err I study English language, sociology, and textiles.

Interviewer: OK, and what about hobbies and things like that, what type of things do you do?

Participant: Err I help out at a brownie group so that’s pretty fun, I’ve got a lot of lively kids erm, so yeah things like that- going for walks and you know…

Interviewer: Ok, and what about your family living arrangements, who’s at home?

Participant: It’s just me, my mum, and my dad. I don’t have any siblings.

Interviewer: OK, an only child then…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK so, what erm would it be OK if you could start telling me a bit about your periods, when they started and things like that?

Participant: They started when I was about 15 and half so I haven’t had them for very long, a year and a half maybe. Erm yeah they were quite painful erm, they normally last for about 5 days probably sort of time….

Interviewer: OK, and did the pain start at the same time as the periods?

Participant: Err yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: OK and has it changed at all? Is it any different to when you first started getting it?

Participant: I think it’s got more painful as time has gone on but it kind of depends each, each month.

Interviewer: OK, so could you talk me through that a little bit so tell me about how, how it could be if it isn’t so bad or if it is bad- can you tell me about the differences between how it can be?

Participant: Yeah erm well some months it’s quite heavy in the first two days and then it levels off the last 3 and it just makes me feel a bit sick and a bit rubbish erm, and sometimes it can just be very,very light all the way through for nearly four days and then the last day it’s just nothing so it normally kind of trails off to the end and has a day of feeling really sick.

Interviewer: And erm is the pain different with the different heaviness, does it vary as well?

Participant: Yeah, the pain is often worse if it’s heavier than if it’s lighter.

Interviewer: OK, and erm so is every single period painful or…

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: OK, so it’s just how much?

Participant: Yeah how much the pain is yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the location of the pain?

Participant: Erm, it’s normally in this area (points to stomach), like lower abdomen? Yeah that kind of area?

Interviewer: Yeah perfect yeah

Participant: Thank you. It’s just that kind of area, I don’t normally, maybe like bottom of my spine but apart from that there’s no pain anywhere else.

Interviewer: OK, and do you get any other erm symptoms at all so erm like hormonal symptoms or any other…

Participant: Erm I often get like slight cramps but afterwards rather than before and erm my breasts are quite sore as well for like a week before it happens.

Interviewer: OK can you sort of describe the pain in your lower abdomen? I know it’s difficult to describe…

Participant: No um, it’s quite, it’s quite, it can be quite sharp erm, the sort of pain that makes you want to double over, erm and it can then go to like quite achy, like just a bit um, just a bit achy and a bit, ohh don’t wanna, like when you’ve gone running and your leg seizes up, it’s a lot like that

Interviewer: OK and erm, does the pain, does it change at all over the course of the period?

Participant: Yeah it starts off quite sharp and achy and then as the period goes on to about day three or five it starts to just level off to like, just sickness just that kind of like churning up stomach sort of feeling.

Interviewer: OK and do you often feel quite sick?

Participant: Yeah, not necessarily wanting to throw up but just churning up and things like that…

Interviewer: Like nausea rather than actually being sick?

Participant: Yeah, yeah

Interviewer: OK and are your periods regular?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Erm, so can you talk to me about, so you mentioned about how sometimes the pain is like a bit worse and sometimes it’s better…

Participant: Mhmm

Interviewer: Can you talk to me about the time frame for that so is it better more or is it worse more… does it alternate? If you know what I mean so that it’s good then bad then good then bad…

Participant: yeah it, it also kind of depends on what I’m doing so if it’s just a normal day then, without any stress or anything then it’ll probably be a lot calmer but if it’s a day where I’ve got to do lots of things it’ll be a lot worse.

Interviewer: OK, OK and can I just ask as well, do you have any un-related medical conditions at all?

Participant: Like physical… no

Interviewer: OK, that’s fine. OK so could you talk to me about… have you ever been to like the doctors or anything like that about the pain?

Participant: Yes I have

Interviewer: OK, could you take me through from the start so when you first decided that you, you wanted to go to the doctors?

Participant: Yeah, I kind of, I can’t remember what it was but I’d had my first few periods and they’d been quite light and just starting erm so I’d been able to deal with them with paracetamol and ibuprofen and things like that um and then after the third or fourth period they started to get a bit heavier and a bit more painful, and I just wasn’t particularly dealing with them very well so I tried erm some of like over the counter period pain but it made me quite dizzy, they had caffeine in them and they didn’t, they worked well but they made me feel like more sick erm and so I decided err, mum suggested go to the doctors erm and we went and they prescribed some methamanic acid which is a lot better to deal with it. And then recently I’ve had more trouble with periods, they’ve been heavier and more difficult and I’m not coping well with them erm and so I went back to the doctors and they prescribed the pill for it as well.

Interviewer: OK, and how’s that going?

Participant: I haven’t started it to take it yet, I’m just waiting till….

Interviewer: Oh right, is that until you come on?

Participant: I don’t know, yeah it’s, I think she said it was 21 days so just trying to work out timings of when I want to start that.

Interviewer: OK so erm, can you talk to me about how you felt when you first went to the doctors about it? How did you feel about going and talking about it?

Participant: I was quite embarrassed erm but I was also I was kind of, I didn’t really know what was going on because it was still quite in the early stages of having periods and a lot of my friends have had them since they were like 13, 14, even younger like 11 and so me starting at like nearly 16 is a bit, like I don't know what to do with this, so it’s a little more difficult.

Interviewer: OK, and how, how was the doctor about it?

Participant: The doctor was really helpful erm suggested a lot of different things like and kind of went for the least powerful to then work up but then that worked fine.

Interviewer: OK so what happened when you said you started having some more difficulties again, you were using the acid and then it got better, can you tell me what happened then?

Participant: Yeah, erm I started using the acid and it was working fine, it was working great and then erm, I just started getting more nervous about it and working myself up erm and sort of just nervous about what’s gonna happen and things like that and very anxious and found that the methamanic acid wasn’t working as well but I don’t know whether that was just because mentally I’d decided it wasn’t gonna work properly, or if it actually didn’t work but it just wasn’t as great so….

Interviewer: So did it stop working for the pain and the heaviness or…

Participant: Yeah I think it just got heavier or and the pain started to get a bit worse and so it didn’t do the job as well as it had done.

Interviewer: OK and can you talk to me a bit about, you mentioned this anxiety and feeling a bit panicky about it, so what’s the cause of that kind of anxiety- the thing that makes you worry so much?

Participant: Makes me worry so much, I erm actually have a panic disorder so I’ve been getting counselling and psychotherapy for it and things like that and it, it just often attaches onto different things and so as soon as I start to get a bit nervous about it, it becomes a bigger problem erm and so that’s really where it stems from and so I don’t think I would have got anxious particularly otherwise but it makes it a lot more difficult to cope with things, it feels like a catastrophe rather than oh it’s just a once a month sort of thing.

Interviewer: OK, are you having, so you said you’re having counselling for panic disorder, are you having any other treatment for that?

Participant: No

Interviewer: OK, how are you finding the counselling?

Participant: Er yeah it’s going pretty well, erm I had erm, I remember how many… but I had a big block of it and then I stopped that earlier in the summer and then I’ve come back just as a little top up, like a little relax sort of thing.

Interviewer: OK. So, coming back to your period, is it the pain that you were panicking about, or was it the heaviness? Or both?

Participant: Yeah, I think it was just both. I just decided that this was a bad week and just sort of blocked it out sort of.

Interviewer: OK so is it bad at the moment while you’re waiting to start the pill?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, so hopefully…

Participant: Hopefully it’ll help… yeah

Interviewer: OK, can you tell me about any examinations you’ve had or anything like that? Have they ever examined you or…

Participant: No, nothing like that

Interviewer: OK, and when you’ve been to the doctors, have they ever like discussed the cause of period pain or…

Participant: No, not particularly.

Interviewer: Has anyone explained anything like that to you?

Participant: Yeah, erm like a little bit, I’ve kind of picked up a little bit but not too much.

Interviewer: Where have you picked it up from?

Participant: Erm, from school, from magazines, things like that erm I talk to my friends a bit about it as well so….

Interviewer: Do you think it would have helped if the doctors discussed that with you?

Participant: Erm, it might of but I don’t really know, I can’t say.

Interviewer: OK, so how, was it the doctor that suggested the pill for you?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: How did you feel when they suggested that?

Participant: Erm well I was a little bit shocked because I thought oh I thought that was for contraceptive use only erm but the doctor was really good, she explained it really well and what was going on and it really reassured me that it was OK, that it was fine.

Interviewer: OK and did your mum go with you to the doctor’s appointment?

Participant: Yeah, but she didn’t go into the room. So, it was just me and the doctor.

Interviewer: OK, how was she about your starting the contraceptive pill?

Participant: Um, yeah I think she just thought that anything that would stop me being in pain must be a good thing so she’s alright about it.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK, so can you tell me what else you do to relieve your period pain?

Participant: Erm, I use hot water bottles, I do a bit of yoga, erm… and that’s really it.

Interviewer: Do you take paracetamol or anything like that?

Participant: Erm I have the metamathic acid but then I kind of top it up with paracetamol if it’s really bad but then… just…. Yeah.

Interviewer: And what do you find is helpful? Do you find the hot water bottle helpful?

Participant: Yeah I find the hot water bottle really helpful.

Interviewer: That’s good, erm and can I ask, is there anything you do within yourself to deal with the pain? So like distraction or relaxation… you talked about yoga..

Participant: Yeah I’ll do a little bit of yoga, just a couple of exercises and then like a hot bath, yeah that really helps.

Interviewer: OK, erm so can I ask about your future expectations, how the pain…. You mentioned that it’s sort of got worse since you started erm so how do you expect it to play out in the future?

Participant: Yeah, yeah. I’m hoping that it’ll get a lot lighter and I’ll be able to deal with it better erm I think I’ll be able to deal with it better as time goes on because obviously I’ve only had periods for like a year, a year and a half so I’m hoping that the more time goes on, I’ll get used to it a bit more.

Interviewer: OK, when you say like being able to deal with it better, what do you mean?

Participant: Erm just like not having to erm kind of take as many tablets or as many, think about it as much, just think oh it’s just another week and I’ll just carry on normally, rather than going period on this specific week.

Interviewer: OK, so at the moment when it’s coming up to it, how do you feel?

Participant: I feel quite anxious about it, erm quite reluctant to do things so if someone’s like “do you want to go for a day out” then I’m kind of like mmm I might not… so I kind of already mentally decide for that week.

Interviewer: OK so has that affected anything like friendships or anything like that when you haven’t been out?

Participant: No, no not really.

Interviewer: OK, that’s good

Participant: Laughs

Interviewer: Do you talk to your friends about it?

Participant: Erm, a little bit, a tiny bit about it but I don't really…

Interviewer: OK, are they quite sort of understanding when you do?

Participant: Yeah, yeah my friends are really good.

Interviewer: OK, can you talk to me about…. So you’re on your period one week, can you talk to me about how it would impact on your life, on your daily life?

Participant: Yeah, erm if it’s quite, if it’s quite heavy I just tend to not really do much, just stay in the house and I often take days off school and just you know sit and wait it out and then as it gets lighter I might do a little bit more but still not loads. And so yeah… I think also if it’s not particularly pain… I just get really anxious about it like I can’t, I cant’ you know.

Interviewer: OK, and can I ask… do you have days off school every month or…

Participant: Erm again, back to err it depends how heavy it is but typically probably yeah, recently I have yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah… and how many days off a month would be typical for you?

Participant: Like 3, something like that.

Interviewer: OK, and how do you feel about that?

Participant: I’m not particularly proud of it to be honest, I quite like… it just… I just want to be able to like cope with it and deal with it and just get on with my life cause I have done before but it’s just recently it’s got quite a big problem.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK so it’s only been recently that you’ve been taking days off of school?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, so if you do go into school, erm with period pain, how would that affect your day? How would your day play out?

Participant: Erm, I’d, like wouldn’t necessarily stick around after school and do extra activities or like in threes and stuff, I’d probably just like sit around or work rather than going out with my mates, I also just yeah I probably wouldn’t be as outgoing as I normally would be.

Interviewer: OK, and does that affect friendships and how you socialise?

Participant: Err sometimes when I’m kind of, it’s not particularly like ‘I can’t be your friend anymore’ but it’s just, I often erm, I don’t say things when I get questioned or things like that just having to think of excuses and not do stuff rather than just be like it’s a period.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK so what type of excuses do you sort of say?

Participant: Errr, I use things like ‘oh I’m doing something for my mum’, or erm ‘oh I’ve got to visit my grandma’, erm ‘I’m busy, I’ve got loads of work to do’, things like that.

Interviewer: OK and why do you come up with excuses rather than say I’ve got period pain?

Participant: I, I just kind of find it easier to say that rather than saying oh it’s really difficult I really struggle because I don’t want to particularly worry about it or think about it.

Interviewer: Have you ever said that to any of your friends?

Participant: Yeah I have, yeah they’re really understanding erm but also it’s kind of like, I didn’t go into detail about it really.

Interviewer: Who do you talk to about it?

Participant: I talk to my mum about it.

Interviewer: OK, and how is she?

Participant: Yeah She, she’s fine about it, she’s fine.

Interviewer: Does she do anything to help you get through it or…

Participant: Erm, she’ll often well she’ll let me stay off and she’ll make me a hot water bottle and things like that and just sympathise really.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK. How about your dad?

Participant: My dad’s also very good at making hot water bottles but he doesn’t really understand it so he kind of, the stuff he knows is like from his sister or my mum or his mum so it’s quite a narrowed understanding.

Interviewer: OK, so it’s easier to talk to mum about it?

Participant: (laughs) yeah.

Interviewer: OK so does it impact on sports or anything like that?

Participant: I don’t really play sports so (laughs)…

Interviewer: OK, how about before you were doing you're a-levels, did it affect whether you would do PE at school?

Participant: Er no I actually found that the exercise would help relieve it a bit and also, cause in a lesson you wouldn’t have time to just sit and think about it while you’re doing something active and it’s alright, you don’t think about it as much.

Interviewer: OK so it can take your mind of it?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK so do you do anything else to take your mind off the pain?

Participant: Errr, I, I kind of read or watch TV, things like that but…

Interviewer: Do you find that helps?

Participant: A little bit but not particularly, I usually find that hot water bottles or baths always help more.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK, and how about your other hobbies?

Participant: No it doesn’t impact on those.

Interviewer: And do you have a part-time job?

Participant: No

Interviewer: OK so we’ve covered social life, how about family life so if you had a family event or something like that, does it impact on anything like that at all?

Participant: Yeah, it impacts it a little bit- I just have to think about it more and have more thought put into it and decide what I want to do and plan out what I’m going to need and how long it’s gonna be for and things like that.

Interviewer: OK, have you got any examples?

Participant: Erm like last Christmas, not like, like 2014, it happened on like boxing day and I was with the family and there was a lot of us, there was like me and my cousins and parents and we were already there so we didn’t have to travel. It was a surprise, I was kind of expecting it but hoping it would come later and it just meant that I had like hot water bottles and like took the day, it was good because it was boxing day so I could just take the day a bit, a bit slower, just a bit like oh I’m just gonna play with presents and like colouring and stuff like that.

Interviewer: OK, and erm did you talk to them about why you had a hot water bottle? Like your family and things? Or did you just get it…

Participant: No I just got it (laughs)

Interviewer: OK, can I ask, does it impact on how you feel about yourself at all? Skin

Participant: Err not particularly, I often find that my skin gets a bit dry like my hair is a bit rougher and my skin’s a bit drier and I just feel like a bit heavy and a bit lethargic but don’t particularly think ‘I hate my legs’ or things like that. I don’t have a body confidence meltdown each time.

Interviewer: OK and erm can I ask about your social support- so you said you talk to your mum, sometimes your dad but you don’t really feel you can relate…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: and sometimes your friends, is there anyone else you talk to for a bit of support or a bit of emotional support?

Participant: Yeah, I often talk to my cousins because they’re a lot older than me so they’re kind of like in their 30’s sort of age and they’re really, really good at support and they help me a lot with a lot of issues and they’re really, really good because they’ve also got, they’ve been through teenage years but then they’ve also got a little bit more and it’s nicer because it’s not your mum whose kind of doing the sensible thing (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah erm does it, how about things like family holidays or something like that, does it ever worry you about that?

Participant: Yeah, a little bit, we often, we don’t often go on beachy sort of holidays but it’s again just thinking about what I need and what I’m gonna take and things like that but I try and kind of ask if the holiday can be here or change the dates a bit- it’s not always possible but in our family we have quite a lot of talking together and deciding together what we want to do so I often ask if we can do it the week after or before or things like that.

Interviewer: OK, are they normally alright with that?

Participant: Yeah they’re normally fine with that

Interviewer: OK, and so we’ve talked about school and what happens when you go to school and you might not feel that great- do you feel that it’s impacted on your school performance at all?

Participant: Mhmm, not particularly, it doesn’t particularly stop me from doing work but it’ll kind of just stop me from, like really pushing myself and getting really involved in the work and things like that so I’ll be a little bit more reserved than I normally would be.

Interviewer: OK, so just one last question- does it impact on your other daily activities- would it impact on what you might do around the home… do you know what I mean, like normal daily things that you would do?

Participant: Yeah. Erm no, but again, I always have it in the back of my mind like oh when do I need to change pads and things like that erm but apart from that it doesn’t really affect too much.

Interviewer: OK, is there anything else you would like to talk about to do with your period pain or anything else that you do to cope with it? Is there any other way that you find is really helpful to you or…

Participant: Erm no not particularly, I quite like music- that helps erm but apart from that I don’t do anything special to relieve it.

Interviewer: OK, is there anything that you would like or that you thnk would help you get through it or…

Participant: Err no, not really.

Interviewer: OK so just waiting for the pill.

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK well thank you very much, can I stop the recording?

Participant: Yeah, it’s fine

Interviewer: Thank you