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**Jana Pittman championing dialogue to
drive diagnosis & treatment of heavy periods**
**New research breaking the silence on a serious
but treatable women's health condition**

Jana Pittman, 40

**Two-time athletics World Champion,
four-time Commonwealth Champion,
women's health doctor, author and
mother-of-six, SYDNEY**



(00:30-00:36)

Please briefly introduce yourself.

My name's Jana Pittman. I was an Olympic athlete for many years for Australia. I'm now a mother of six beautiful children and I'm a medical doctor.

(00:39-01:10)

What were your three life goals that you set before 10 years of age?

As a young kid, I don't know why, but I already had the goals of being a mum to multiple children, becoming a doctor and winning the Olympics. So, they were my three life goals that I set well before I was 10 years of age.

And obviously I've got two out of three, so I think that's pretty good. Honestly, my goal now is to do advocacy in women's health. So, to use my well-known name in the past to hopefully help women make decisions about their life, around their health, around their family, and around making sure that they get the best out of their own lives, career-wise, as well as balancing motherhood.

(01:12-01:34)

How do you manage to prioritise your own health while juggling motherhood with your professional career?

I'm my worst nightmare. I definitely don't prioritise my own wellbeing at times, but I have to say... it's short-term. I only have babies that are young right now for a very short period. They're not going to be 18-month-old twins for the next five years.

Ultimately, if you fall apart, it means your whole family can't go on without you. So, it's one of those situations where you need to make sure you know what your priorities are with yourself.

(01:37-01:52)

Why do women tend not to prioritise themselves?

Our whole lives, women continuously prioritise other people, and their family, and their networks around them. And so, we have to change that message. We need women to know that you can't function if you're not well functioning yourself. So, if our bodies aren't working, how can we then prioritise others?

(01:56-02:32)

Have you ever experienced heavy periods, and if so, do they catch you by surprise?

I was definitely one of those women who thought my heavy periods were normal – probably because it's not a conversation you have with your friends every day. "How often do you change your tampon?" is not something that comes up over coffee. So, for many years, for most of my adult life, I thought I had very normal periods and just went through crazy amounts of packets of menstrual products.

So, I think it was really only the last four or five years once I've got into medicine, that I realised that I really had quite heavy bleeding, and for prolonged periods of time, and I was one of the women who didn't go and talk to anyone about it. So, I didn't go and see my GP or anyone who I was involved with around what solutions could be available for my comfort.

(02:35-03:15)

Can you reflect on your periods during your 20s as a competitive athlete?

So, I had a really interesting history through my twenties. I was an athlete, but in the off season I'd have heavy menstrual bleeding, then I would compete, my body weight would drop a little bit and my periods would lighten off. So, it was so confusing to me about my own body. But then when I was a normal weight and post-sport, I would bleed for four or five days, but very, very heavy.

So, the first two or three days I would regularly bleed through my clothes, and it would always catch me unaware. I'd be out training, and I'd be having blood through my pants. At work, I wear very light scrubs and I regularly would have a spot on my clothes and be like, 'oh my God, how embarrassing. Did anybody notice?' So, I didn't know that was abnormal though. So, it wasn't until I started talking to people around what their period experience was that I realised mine are really, really heavy.

(03:18-03:38)

Did your heavy periods ever affect your athletics career?

I was always such a strong ambassador that you run, whether you're menstruating or not. Whereas I have a lot of young friends who would stop sport, when they had their cycles. And I was always like, there is no way my period's getting in the way of my competition. So, I've raced, I won the World Championships, while I was menstruating. So, I tried to prove that a lot of it's psychological as well as, I'm well aware, that my body was uncomfortable in that space, but I wanted to prove that women could do it anyway.

(03:41-04:27)

Why is it so important for women to understand the norms of heavy menstrual bleeding?

We need women to understand the norms of bleeding, so that they can then get assistance, when things don't go the way that they should.

For so many years I had it, and didn't even know, and that to me says that so many women are going to be in the same boat as me. They're not going to understand what their body's going through. So that's a huge problem.

We need women to understand their bodies better, but also to break the taboo. So, if someone like me, whose well known, is happy to talk about their bleeding and put it out in the public and encourage discussion between women and families, then that's a fantastic thing, and that's what needs to be done. it's really important to highlight that heavy menstrual bleeding is not a normal part of being a woman.

That we need women to understand that they need to get help, that there are treatment options out there to really improve their quality of life and that they aren't going to get them unless they raise their voice and speak to someone, hopefully their GP, around what those options are.

(04:32-04:58)

What are your thoughts on the new Australian research on heavy menstrual bleeding involving 5,000 women aged 35-52 years?

The new Australian research that's recently come out... around 5,000 Australian women that have contributed information around their bleeding profile... So how much are they actually bleeding? And it's quite alarming to think that 72% of those women reported that they've, at least once in their life, experienced heavy menstrual bleeding, and one in four of those unfortunately experienced it on a regular occurrence.

So, that's really hard to think that, that many women are unfortunately are having to experience that bleeding. And we know only a small portion of them are seeking help.

(05:03-05:37)

According to the new research, 1 in 4 Australian women experience heavy menstrual bleeding often, or always. Yet so many women continue to suffer in silence. Why is this the case?

Sadly, we know that one in four women experience heavy menstrual bleeding on a regular occurrence, which is really heart breaking. And we also know that 50% of those unfortunately haven't sought treatment or spoken to someone about their heavy menstrual bleeding. Now, I think largely that's because they often don't recognise that they have it. They think their bleeding is quite normal and it's not until they discuss their symptoms of fatigue or psychological stress that's associated with feeling so tired as a result of the bleeding, that someone might suggest for them to get help. So, I think this research is really alarming and it really highlights the fact that we need to encourage our women to educate themselves on what normal bleeding is.

(05:42-06:03)

You've previously said that all women deserve dignity when it comes to their menstrual health. Can you reflect on this?

All women and girls deserve dignity when it comes to their menstrual health. So that's in relation to having adequate products to look after their menstrual health, that's making sure that they have education and awareness of what is normal bleeding, and then access to treatment and help if their bleeding becomes abnormal. So that might be heavy, it might be painful, it might be that they're feeling symptoms around that cycle, when it comes to their mood, that also need to be addressed.

(06:08-07:08)

Can you reflect on the stigma associated with heavy menstrual bleeding?

it's an incredibly beautiful thing that women do, because it allows them to have children, and that's obviously, the process is that you shed that endometrial lining so that your womb can be ready for the potential baby that might be coming. But for some reason we don't see it like that. We see it as a lot of women see it as a stigma of being dirty or bleeding, and in the past, generations ago, women would stay at home and be locked away and it would be considered hysteria around that time of the month. the vast majority of women have experienced an embarrassing episode, when it comes to their periods. That might've been the first period back in high school and they still vividly remember getting their first menstrual cycle and how mortifying that was in front of the boys. Or it might be like me, who experienced it in a race, where I remember getting my period halfway through my racing at a major

championship and having blood on my leg and thinking, "oh my God, has the crowd noticed?" So, we need to openly have that discussion so that people have these experiences and go, "oh, how funny! It's just my menstrual cycle." Rather than going, "oh my God, did somebody notice?" And "what is that going to mean for me?"

(07:13-07:49)

What is your message to Australian women and girls living with heavy menstrual bleeding?

There is no time where a girl should be thinking that heavy menstrual bleeding is something that is normal. Women should not be going through that experience, and we need to make sure that they have that empowerment to go out and get help.

It's time to stop suffering in silence. You need to go and see your GP. No woman should ever feel like their periods are getting in the way of their life, be it psychologically and their career and their family life. It's time to break that taboo, to start talking to your family and friends. Encourage that conversation, because you might actually find someone else in your group also has heavy menstrual bleeding, and you need to encourage them to go and see their GP as well. There are so many options out there to really help with this really unfortunate situation, and it's time to action that.

Dr Brad Robinson,

**Obstetrician & Gynaecologist,
Greenslopes Private Hospital, BRISBANE**

(07:58-08:12)

What is heavy menstrual bleeding?

Heavy menstrual bleeding is blood loss that is excessive in a woman's period, and it's excessive to the point that it causes a compromise in the quality of her life, either her physical life, her emotional life, her social life, or her sexual life.



(08:15-08:31)

What contributes to a woman's risk of experiencing heavy menstrual bleeding?

There are a lot of different things that can contribute to a woman having heavy periods. It can range from platelet dysfunction to hormone imbalances, to blood clotting disorders, to thyroid dysfunction, to fibroids, endometriosis, adenomyosis.

(08:34-08:48)

What was the aim of the new, Australian, heavy menstrual bleeding research involving 5,000 Australian women aged 35 to 52?

The aim of the new Australian heavy menstrual bleeding research involving 5,000 Australian women aged between 35 and 52 is really to break that silence behind what is a very serious but treatable condition.

(08:51-09:12)

What did the new Australian research on heavy menstrual bleeding reveal?

The new Australian research on heavy menstrual bleeding revealed that this is a really serious issue. Three in four women have heavy menstrual periods and one in four have heavy menstrual periods always, and often. Of those women that have heavy menstrual periods always and often, they describe their lives as being miserable and they're depressed.

(09:15-09:40)

According to the new Australian research what are the major heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms experienced by women?

The new Australian research shows that the major symptoms faced by women with heavy menstrual bleeding include feeling weak, feeling bothered by the volume of menstrual loss or pain, having to change sanitary products more than every one to two hours, sometimes having to wear more than one sanitary product at a time, having to change products at night, passing of clots, and also having flooding of blood.

(09:44-10:11)

What percentage of women surveyed want more open conversations around treating heavy periods and what are the implications of this?

The research shows that 92 per cent of Australian women want to have more open, transparent communication about this problem, and that's actually a pretty sad indictment on the way things currently are... Because I think it reflects that women for so long have been made to feel by society, potentially by the medical profession, that heavy menstrual bleeding is normal, that periods are normal, and therefore heavy periods are normal as well, and that is just not the case.

(10:15-10:42)

According to the new Australian research, why are women mistakenly accepting their heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms as normal?

The research shows that one in two Australian women have very little knowledge or no knowledge of what they can do to treat heavy menstrual bleeding. So that means that these women are continuing to suffer in silence. They're not having the conversations that they should be having with their GP or healthcare provider, and if women don't know what the symptoms of heavy menstrual bleeding are, then they're really not empowered to be able to seek treatment for that.

(10:46-11:01)

According to the new research, how many Australian women affected by heavy periods de-prioritise their own healthcare needs, and why is this the case?

The new research shows that one in two Australian women don't prioritise their own healthcare needs, so don't look after this issue. They do what most women do, and that is put the needs of other members of their family before themselves.

(11:04-11:33)

What role does stigma play in delaying the diagnosis of heavy menstrual bleeding?

Unfortunately, the main reason heavy menstrual bleeding is undertreated in Australia is because women have been forced to consider that all menstrual bleeding is normal. They have been made to feel like they can't prioritise their own health and they can't raise as an issue, things that are concerning them. So many women feel like, oh, I can't complain about that. That's just the way it is. I have to put up with that. And those that do seek to get attention for it feel like whingers or complainers.

(11:36-11:46)

Why is it so important for women to be informed about period health?

I think the times come when we should lift the veil. We should expose heavy menstrual bleeding for the problem that it is, and we should help women to stop suffering in silence.

(11:49-12:09)

How does heavy menstrual bleeding affect a woman's overall quality of life?

Women that have heavy menstrual periods that aren't having them treated, have undoubtedly a lower quality of life. They're fearful about an upcoming period, when they get their period, they're fearful of doing things they would normally do. They're potentially worried about embarrassing situations. They're concerned about being able to be intimate with their partner.

(12:13-12:29)

What are the psychological implications of living with heavy menstrual bleeding?

The mental implications of living with heavy menstrual bleeding include things like stress, low confidence, anxiety. In fact, the research shows that women that have heavy menstrual bleeding can say that the psychological impacts are worse than the physical impacts.

(12:32-12:54)

How treatable is heavy menstrual bleeding and what options are currently available?

There are a whole range of options that a woman can employ in order to reduce the burden of her period. We can start off with non-hormonal medications. We can then move into hormonal medications like the contraceptive pill. Then there are intrauterine devices that can be employed. And then there's surgical treatments available that include things like endometrial ablations or hysterectomies.

(12:58-13:14)

What is endometrial ablation?

Endometrial ablation is a surgical procedure whereby a device is used and put inside a woman's uterus. It generates sound waves and heat, which essentially sears the inside lining of the uterus to either reduce, or stop a woman's menstrual bleeding.

(13:18-13:35)

Why are so many women not seeking treatment?

The new Australian research sadly shows that only one in four Australian women have sought treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding. I think that women really need to feel empowered to seek information from their health provider to go to their GP and not to feel like this is just something that they should put up with.

Dr Talat Uppal,

**Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, & Founder
& Director of Women's Health Road,
SYDNEY**



(13:43-14:00)

What is heavy menstrual bleeding?

Heavy menstrual bleeding is excessive menstrual loss, which affects the woman's quality of life. This could be physical, this could be emotional, could be social, could be, and or her material quality of life. And heavy menstrual bleeding can be alone, or it can be associated with other symptoms.

(14:04-14:16)

What was the aim of the new, Australian, heavy menstrual bleeding research involving 5,000 Australian women aged 35 to 52?

The aim of the new Australian research on heavy menstrual bleeding involving 5,000 women between the ages of 35 and 52, was to break the silence on this common but very treatable condition.

(14:19-14:35)

According to the new Australian research how many women aged 35 to 52 years are experiencing heavy periods?

According to the new research, looking at women between 35 and 52 years of age, three quarters of women have experienced heavy menstrual bleeding in the past, whereas one quarter of women are experiencing it often or always.

(14:39-14:53)

According to the new Australian research, how do women living with heavy menstrual bleeding describe their condition?

Women with persistent heavy menstrual bleeding described their condition in very negative terms, so they found it depressing and miserable, and that is understandable, because it does rob them of their best quality of life.

(14:55-15:19)

According to the new Australian research, what are the major heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms experienced by women?

According to the new Australian research around heavy menstrual bleeding, some of the major symptoms women report include feeling weak, changing their sanitary protection, one to two hourly bloodstained clothing affecting their quality of life, whether it's their work or their, uh, athletic life or their relationships, or, um, they might be passing clots.

(15:22-15:56)

What percentage of women surveyed want more open conversations around treating heavy periods and what are the implications of this?

In this new Australian research, 92% of women articulated that they want more conversations and more dialogue around heavy menstrual bleeding. And this is such a powerful message for us. The new Australian research has shown that by not discussing openly about women's menstrual health, they might have less knowledge about this condition, and so that then leads to underdiagnosis, undertreatment and less confidence to seek care for the condition because they're not aware that there are all these options available for them.

(15:59-16:34)

According to the new Australian research, why are women mistakenly accepting their heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms as normal?

According to the new Australian research, women are continuing to suffer in silence. And one in two women reported that they had little or no knowledge about the treatment of heavy menstrual bleeding. And similarly, just over half of women surveyed said that they're yet to see their general practitioner for medical advice. These are quite profound statistics, and women need to have an idea of how long a period normally is or how heavy the flow should be, so that when it deviates from normal, they're able to flag that and seek timely assistance.

(16:37-17:02)

What role does stigma play in delaying the diagnosis of heavy menstrual bleeding?

Stigma is a very complex space, and women's health is riddled with taboo and with stigma, unfortunately even now. And the impact that has, is that women then often don't seek care or they're not confident to speak to either their peers, their friends, their family, or particularly importantly, um, a, a health professional because they are ashamed of this condition, unfortunately.

(17:05-17:20)

Why is it so important for women to be informed about period health?

It's so important to be aware of your menstrual health because it allows you to seek timely medical assistance if there is a change, or if these cycles are so heavy that they can benefit from medical support.

(17:23-17:41)

How can we break the stigma and shame associated with heavy menstrual bleeding?

There is significant stigma and shame associated with heavy menstrual bleeding. It is so crucial that women start having conversations with their friends, with their schoolmates, with their, um, work at, work at, with their family and friends, so that there is more and more acceptance that this is normal.

(17:45-17:59)

How does heavy menstrual bleeding affect a woman's overall quality of life?

Heavy menstrual bleeding can have a huge negative impact on women's quality of life, and this can be on different facets of their life. It could be time off work, it could be time off school. It could be their, um, leisure activities that they had planned or sport.

(18:02-18:21)

How does heavy menstrual bleeding affect a country's productivity?

Heavy menstrual bleeding has a huge impact on productivity and to the cost of the nation because women are such an important and valued part of our workforce. If they're unable to come to work or they're having to reduce their hours or they're not feeling their personal best or living their best quality of life, it has a direct impact on that.

(18:24-18:39)

What are the mental implications of living with heavy menstrual bleeding?

There can be variable mental health implications of living with heavy menstrual bleeding, and these can include heightened anxiety, it can include a low mood, it can include low confidence to reach out and do you know, things that, because their quality of life is compromised.

(18:43-18:49)

How treatable is heavy menstrual bleeding and what options are currently available?

Heavy menstrual bleeding is absolutely treatable and there are multiple options available for women.

(18:52-19:17)

What is endometrial ablation?

Endometrial ablation is a minimally invasive procedure available for women as an option. It's suitable for some women. And the good thing about it is that, it's of, it's a day surgical procedure. It has a high success and a high satisfaction rate, and it's relatively easy for women to have and a procedure that I generally encourage patients to seriously consider as one of the options available to them.

(19:20-19:38)

Why are so many women not seeking treatment?

Sometimes women do seek care, but don't, they're not being made aware of all the options available for them. So, it's really important for us to have these open conversations and that for healthcare professionals, to proactively inquire about menstrual health as part of their review.

(19:41-19:54)

What is your message to Australian women aged 35-52 years who are living with heavy menstrual bleeding?

My message to women who are experiencing heavy menstrual bleeding is that please don't put up with it. Please seek timely care with your general practitioner. This is a problem that is treatable. Please allow us to help you in this space.

Kate, 39

Physiotherapist & mother-to-two who battled anaemia for four years due to HMB, BRISBANE

(20:03-20:12)

For how long do you suspect you were living with heavy menstrual bleeding?

I've been struggling with heavy menstrual bleeding for approximately four years. Um, pre-children, no issues with heavy bleeding, but post- children, it became a big issue for me.



(20:15-20:33)

What were your heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms?

My symptoms of heavy menstrual bleeding were, um, obviously a lot of blood loss where I was having to change, um, uh, pads and sanitary products.

Every couple of hours, my periods became closer together and the really big problem for me was the severe, um, fatigue and exhaustion associated with the anaemia that I developed over that time as well.

(20:37-20:56)

How does it feel to live with heavy menstrual bleeding?

Living with heavy menstrual bleeding has been really challenging over the last four years. Um, and I think a lot of it is because we have this idea as women that we have to suffer in silence, um, because, uh, this is part of having children and this is part of approaching menopause, but I think there's obviously a line where this is not normal and this is irregular bleeding and it's too much.

(20:59-21:15)

Why do you think heavy menstrual bleeding is still considered a sensitive, taboo topic?

I think there's still very much a stigma in talking about heavy menstrual bleeding. Uh, I think if you were a woman who didn't have a doctor who, uh, or a doctor who is dismissive about these symptoms, it would be very hard to push this conversation to be able to get the help that you need for the symptoms you're experiencing.

(21:18-21:42)

What roles should GPs be playing when it comes to discussing heavy menstrual bleeding with their patients?

I feel it's essential that GPs are having this conversation with their patients, um, particularly post-childbirth, um, and as their patients are getting older, um, because they, there is a, a likelihood that they're gonna be experiencing some of these symptoms related to heavy menstrual bleeding. And I think the onus is really on them as GPs to make sure that, um, they're the gateway to be able to get the help that we need, um, as women who are having problems with heavy menstrual bleeding.

(21:46-22:16)

For how long did you mistakenly accept your heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms as simply "a normal part of being a woman"?

So, it was probably about four years where, that I was having quite, quite severe, uh, heavy bleeding, um, related to heavy menstrual bleeding, and I just assumed this was normal. I thought, oh, well, my body has changed having had children and this is my lot, um, and I just have to deal with this. I suppose the catch there though is that I'm only 39 and it's probably, menopause is probably still another 10

years away. And, and it just then became, I don't think I can do 10 more years if this, this is, this is not possible.

(22:19-22:43)

When did you realise your heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms were not normal?

When I, um, started having a lot of problems with anaemia related to heavy menstrual bleeding, uh, and the fact that I couldn't then supplement my iron appropriately, um, that's when I realised this isn't normal to be dealing with this level of symptoms and this level of fatigue and exhaustion, um, and this level of blood loss really, um, that's abnormal. I shouldn't, I shouldn't have this. Um, and I probably need to talk to someone about this.

(22:46-23:05)

What prompted you to finally seek medical attention, and when did you do so?

After four years of, of heavy bleeding, um, then and becoming anaemic, um, and then not being able to tolerate my iron supplements anymore, I had an allergic reaction to them. Uh, that was when I decided that it was time to talk to someone, um, to see if there were other options out there, um, that could help with this level of heavy menstrual bleeding.

(23:08-23:13)

When were you diagnosed with heavy menstrual bleeding and by whom?

I was diagnosed with heavy menstrual bleeding in May of 2023, uh, by my gynaecologist.

(23:16-23:31)

How did you feel when you were diagnosed with heavy menstrual bleeding?

I was relieved to get a diagnosis related to my heavy menstrual bleeding and my anaemia. Um, it got to the point where it was affecting my mental health and I thought, why am I not coping with this? So to have someone give me a diagnosis that fit my symptoms where I could then seek treatment was, was life changing.

(23:35-23:44)

How has living with heavy menstrual bleeding affected your quality of life, from a physical, mental, social, and professional perspective?

Living with heavy menstrual bleeding has affected my life in, in facets of, uh, my physical health, my mental health and my time with my family.

(23:47-24:02)

How has living with heavy menstrual bleeding affected your physical health?

I have not had any energy to be doing any exercise for myself. I used to be, um, an avid gym goer. Uh, I used to do a lot of yoga, and over the last four years that has very much fallen to the wayside. I've just not had the energy.

(24:05-24:29)

How has living with heavy menstrual bleeding compromised your professional career as a physiotherapist?

As a physiotherapist, my role is fairly active. I'm constantly on the move and up with patients, and having heavy menstrual bleeding was always a consideration because I was constantly worried that I was going to be leaking, um, when I was treating patients. Um, making sure that I had pads and tampons at all times just in case I needed to change products. Um, so yeah, it, it was, uh, a difficulty at work.

(24:32-24:42)

How has your heavy menstrual bleeding compromised your role as a mother?

As a mum of two small children, uh, it's exhausting at the best of times. Uh, and then having heavy menstrual bleeding on top of that has been, uh, quite a challenge over the last couple of years.

(24:45-25:06)

How did your heavy menstrual bleeding affect your mental health?

I had definitely noticed a, a slide or a decline in my mental health where I was constantly overwhelmed both at work and at home. Um, I was always exhausted. I was really struggling to be able to, to think clearly at the best of times. Um, and so it was, it was a big challenge for me in terms of rebuilding my mental health.

(25:09-25:28)

How has living with heavy menstrual bleeding compromised your social life?

Uh, having heavy menstrual bleeding has had an effect on my social life to the point where I noticed that I was avoiding activities. I didn't wanna get in the pool with the kids at times, um, just 'cause it was just too hard to try to be able to sort out, regardless of whatever product I would use, I would bleed through. Um, so I definitely have changed the activities that I would do, um, as a consequence of it.

(25:34-25:48)

Why do you think so many women do not realise that heavy menstrual bleeding is treatable, and that a range of effective treatments are available?

I think a lot of women don't know, uh, the options that are available out there because we don't necessarily have these conversations. We don't have them with our families, we don't have them with our friends, and we certainly don't have them with the people we should, be our doctor, uh, because of the stigma around talking about your periods, unfortunately.

(25:51-26:23)

Can you reflect on period stigma?

I think period stigma starts really early and I think it's sort of indoctrinated from an early age where when you first get your period when you are younger, um, and at school, and it's a big thing unfortunately, especially if you go to a co-ed school where, uh, there's a lot of shame associated with, with people knowing that you're bleeding. Um, and, and that starts at an early age. And I think unfortunately that stays with you a lot of your life where it is almost considered a, a shameful or a secret act, um, that every, every woman experiences this. Um, so it should be something that we're talking about openly.

(26:27-26:39)

What is your message to other Australian women living with heavy menstrual bleeding?

My message to other women who are experiencing heavy menstrual bleeding would be to talk about it, to talk openly about it with your family and friends, and definitely make sure you have a good GP and talk to your GP about it so that you can get the treatment that you need.

(26:42-27:00)

Can you reflect on the treatment that you underwent to control your heavy menstrual bleeding?

So having an endometrial ablation for my heavy menstrual bleeding has been life changing for me. Um, I have no longer have any of the symptoms related to heavy menstrual bleeding. I have energy again, I'm able to get back in the gym, play with my kids, um, work and have a normal life, again.

(27:03-27:22)

Can you describe the ablation procedure?

The endometrial ablation was a simple procedure. It was, um, a five-minute procedure where you have an anaesthetic and while you're under, uh, they, uh, insert the device, um, via your vagina into your uterus. And they basically, using radio waves, they sear, um, your uterus so that it no longer sheds, and you no longer have any bleeding.

(27:25-27:42)

How do you feel following the ablation procedure?

I felt great following the endometrial ablation, there was a slight period of a couple of weeks of abdominal discomfort, um, uh, nowhere near as bad as period pain. Um, and then since then I've had a little bit of spotting and now no bleeding whatsoever. And it feels fantastic.

(27:45-27:53)

What should women be doing in order to live comfortably?

I think we know now as women that we don't have to put up with these severe symptoms of heavy menstrual bleeding, um, and we can live comfortably and live a better life.

Annie, 55

Women's business branding specialist, mentor & mother-to-five who battled with HMB for a decade, SYDNEY

(28:01-28:22)

For how long do you suspect you were living with heavy menstrual bleeding?

I actually had heavy menstrual bleeding for around 10 years, from the age of 42 to 52, increasing in the, the amount of, of blood that I had on a every month flow. Uh, so I went from normal bleeding for all of my period cycle, to around 42 when it suddenly started to increase, and then heavy, heavier until I was 52.



(28:25-28:49)

What were your heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms?

I had, obviously an increased heavy flow to the point that I required multiple sanitary products, you know, ongoing, which meant that I was overflowing. It meant that I was sometimes having two super tampons at the same time, plus, uh, a pad. It meant that I was also iron deficient. I became very, very tired, uh, and I didn't realise that I needed iron replacement for a period of time.

(28:52-29:53)

Why do you think heavy menstrual bleeding is still considered a sensitive, taboo topic?

It surprises me that heavy menstrual bleeding is still such a taboo topic because we are happily talking about our, our boobs and our bum and, and things that we get, um, tested. Now, particularly being 50 plus, you know, I get invitations to get mammograms and, and bowel tests. And so heavy menstrual bleeding is still one of those topics that I've never actually heard openly discussed in the media and by people who should be, you know, our authorities in this space. So it is, it is probably just because it's uncomfortable. People don't like talking about periods. They don't like talking about blood. They don't like talking about when women are feeling, you know, drained and exhausted and, and, and, and not feeling at their best because part of women's roles is that you're supposed to be, you know, positive, happy, caring, uh, having it all together, multitasking. And so it has been a topic that has been chronically, you know, under discussed to the point of not discussed at all. And I think that's the time that we've got to change.

(29:57-30:13)

For how long did you mistakenly accept your heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms as simply "a normal part of being a woman"?

When I was 42 years of age, I noticed that my period suddenly went from three days and just an average sort of flow, to suddenly increasing, increasing. Sometimes it was heavier, sometimes it was lighter. But then over the next probably three to five years, it was just heavier and heavier and heavier.

(30:16-30:38)

Why did you accept your heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms as being normal?

I was just busy. I was busy with life. I was busy growing my career. I was busy raising my family of five children. I was busy getting into sport and having more opportunities to do things for myself that I hadn't done when I was parenting all my littlies. And so, it was probably a, a, a time that I just didn't focus in on, is this normal, and how badly is it affecting my day-to-day life?

30:41-31:04)

When did you realise your heavy menstrual bleeding symptoms were not normal?

I remember the exact day where I was actually in my home, and I was just overcome with cramps. I couldn't even stand up straight. And I'm thinking, oh my gosh, this is just crazy. You know, here I am in this terrible situation. I was bleeding heavily. I couldn't stand up. And I thought, right, today is the day that I am going to book an appointment and get this investigated.

(31:06-31:21)

When were you diagnosed with heavy menstrual bleeding and by whom?

I was finally diagnosed by my gynaecologist, age 52. And it was a very exciting day actually, because I finally found out the reason that I'd had my heavy menstrual bleeding, and I also found out how I could treat it. So it really actually changed my life.

(31:26-31:47)

How has living with heavy menstrual bleeding affected your physical health?

As an outdoorsy person, I kayak, I hike. It really, uh, just made me feel that I didn't have the energy that I wanted emotionally. It was really quite distressing, you know, it, it upset me that I had to deal with this. I felt that I had a private pain that I was dealing with that I didn't feel supported by, really, because I didn't know what to do with it.

(31:50-32:16)

How has living with heavy menstrual bleeding affected your sleep?

I remember waking up like every three hours or a couple of times actually waking up feeling wet because my, my sanitary products had overflowed. And then I've got blood on my sheets and I'm like, oh my God, this is just one distressing, but two, that's why I'm feeling so tired. That's why I'm feeling so exhausted. If you can't get a good night's sleep, if you're waking up every three or four hours, it really starts to impact every area of your life.

(32:21-32:54)

How has living with heavy menstrual bleeding compromised your professional career as a women's business branding specialist and mentor?

I've been an executive CEO for over a decade and run multiple businesses. So the public face of Annie would be that, you know, you're always showing up, you're confident, you know, you are, you're well prepared, you're well groomed. Uh, but underneath that is, I'm like any other woman, you know, I've, I'm feeling insecure about am I, you know, do, is my period gonna overflow? I'm wearing a beautiful dress. Now is that going to create an accident? Or even if I've got associated pain with my bleeding, I'm not feeling that I am, um, showing up as my best self.

(32:57-33:21)

How has your heavy menstrual bleeding compromised your role as a mother?

I had twins when I was 23, another set of twins when I was 25, and then had my fifth child at 32. So my heavy menstrual bleeding didn't start till 42. So they were actually, uh, much older in that journey. And I'm actually thankful 'cause I cannot even imagine how I would've raised the requirement of, of that parenting time if I'd had the heavy menstrual bleeding then.

(33:26-33:43)

How long did it take for you to realise that your heavy menstrual bleeding was treatable, and that effective treatment options were available?

It took me 10 years to realise that heavy menstrual bleeding is treatable. I remember being at that first consultation with a gynaecologist who then suddenly said, Annie, you have been a soldier. You have been putting up with this for 10 years. We can definitely start treatment today.

(33:48-34:17)

Why do you think so many women do not realise that heavy menstrual bleeding is treatable, and that a range of treatment options are available?

I think so many women don't realise that heavy menstrual bleeding is not normal and that there are treatment options available because it's a conversation that we never have with each other. We might not have had that with our mothers. Uh, we certainly don't have it with our girlfriends. And so if this hasn't been an area that know someone like myself who actually then starts talking about it, you're unaware of how important it is to have those conversations and that you need to seek medical assistance.

(34:21-34:42)

Do you think there is a period stigma?

I think there still is a period stigma, uh, a conversation that we just don't have. You know, it's something that you privately have monthly. That's just part of being a woman, but it's not in the open conversation. And so we need to actually turn around that stigma and actually start having those conversations, because this is actually just part of our normal, normal health.

(34:45-35:13)

What is your message to other Australian women living with heavy menstrual bleeding?

My message to other Australian women living with heavy menstrual bleeding is to actually realise that it's not normal. That there are a range of treatment options available, and they should seek those out with a health professional. And so it's no, not a time to then just soldier on. It's not a time to avoid it. It's not a time to be too busy like I was. It's a time to value your own health, make it a number one priority, and have that conversation with a health professional because there are treatment options available.

(35:16-35:37)

How comfortable is life for you now post-treatment?

I feel so much more energetic. I feel that I'm just living comfortably in all areas of my life. I can go out hiking with my friends. I can feel like I've got time for my adult children and my granddaughters. I feel like I've got energy. I'm not iron deficient anymore. I've got no cramps anymore. It's just really just allowed me to step into the woman that I was born to be.

OVERLAY

TIME CODE	DESCRIPTION
(35:40-35:50)	Close up – Image of woman's uterus.
(35:51-35:59)	Mid shot – Image of woman curled up on couch, holding her stomach with both arms.
(36:00-36:15)	Wide shot – Group of women smiling, laughing, and talking to one another on park bench.
(36:16-36:28)	Wide shot – Woman sitting on edge of bed, holding stomach.
(36:29-36:54)	Wide shot – Woman walking to lounge, sitting down, rubbing stomach, lying down, in pain.
(36:55-37:04)	Mid shot – Jana Pittman 'World Champion - 400m Hurdles August 2023' trophy on top of desk.
(37:05-37:13)	Wide shot – Camera pan across to Jana, sitting at dining table, typing on laptop.
(37:14-37:19)	Wide shot – Camera pan down to Jana, sitting at dining table, typing on laptop.
(37:20-37:22)	Close up – Jana's laptop.
(37:23-37:27)	Extreme close up – Jana's face.
(37:28-37:32)	Close up – Jana scrolling through information on her laptop.
(37:33-37:44)	Close up – Camera pan up to Jana Pittman's face, Jana Pittman focusing on laptop.
(37:45-37:56)	Wide shot – Jana's toddler running towards her, Jana picking him up in her arms, and kissing him, releasing him back on the ground, toddler laughing and running towards camera.
(37:57-38:08)	Mid shot – Jana's toddler running back to her, Jana Pittman kissing him on the cheek and picking him up, standing and holding him in her arms, tickling his cheek. Jana taking and kissing other son's hand.
(38:09-38:22)	Mid shot – Jana holding both children in each arm, twirling them, spinning, dancing and laughing with both.
(38:23-38:32)	Close up – Jana holding child in each arm, twirling them, spinning, dancing and laughing with her two young children. Camera focusing on Jana's youngest son.
(38:33-39:07)	Wide shot – Jana's daughter running towards her, Jana embracing her, picking her up, kissing her on the cheek, putting her back on the ground. Camera pan to Jana's other daughter, walking through doorway to Jana, Jana leaning over, embracing her. Camera pan down to Jana's youngest son, cuddling her legs, Jana picking him up and dancing with him in her arms.
(39:08-39:19)	Mid shot – Jana holding her youngest son, twirling and dancing with him in her arms.
(39:20-39:31)	Wide shot – Camera pans to Jana's eldest son, spinning his brother in his arms, Jana twirling and dancing with her youngest son in her arms.
(39:32-39:36)	Wide shot – Jana twirling and dancing with her youngest son in her arms, standing next to her eldest son who is twirling and dancing with his brother in his arms. Jana's other children playing around them.
(39:37-39:47)	Wide shot – Jana's children laughing, twirling and dancing in front of her, Jana kissing her child in her arms.
(39:48-40:12)	Wide shot – Jana's children taking turns with Jana, practising tricks with her.
(40:13-40:17)	Close up – 'Greenslopes obstetrics & gynaecology' sign on practice building.
(40:18-40:22)	Close up – Obstetrician sign.
(40:23-40:39)	Wide shot – Dr Brad Robinson walking down practice hallway, talking to receptionist, receptionist handing Dr Robinson documents and Dr Robinson continuing walking down practice hallway.
(40:40-40:44)	Close up – Dr Brad Robinson sign on door.
(40:45-40:54)	Mid shot – Dr Robinson sitting at desk, looking at computer screen in front of him.

(40:55-40:57)	Close up – Dr Robinson's face.
(40:58-41:01)	Close up – Dr Robinson typing on keyboard.
(41:02-41:09)	Mid shot – Camera focusing on computer screen over Dr Robinson's shoulder.
(41:10-41:16)	Wide shot – Dr Robinson talking with Kate (patient).
(41:17-41:30)	Mid shot – Dr Robinson talking with Kate.
(41:30-41:37)	Mid shot – (insert name) talking to Dr Robinson.
(41:38-41:53)	Mid shot – Dr Robinson talking with Kate.
(41:54-42:10)	Close up – Camera panning from diagram of women's uterus on desk to Dr Robinson's face, camera panning back to diagram on desk.
(42:11-42:18)	Mid shot – Dr Robinson talking.
(42:19-42:26)	Mid shot – Dr Robinson standing, talking to Kate about her uterus.
(42:27-42:36)	Mid shot – Dr Robinson pressing on Kate's stomach, Kate laying on patient bed.
(42:37-42:40)	Close up – Camera panning across 'The Women's Health Road' sign on door.
(42:41-42:54)	Wide shot – Annie (patient) walking through practice doorway to reception. Annie talking with receptionist, Annie sitting down in waiting room chairs.
(42:55-43:12)	Wide shot – Dr Talat Uppal walking through practice hallway greeting Annie in waiting room, gesturing Annie to walk through hallway. Dr Uppal walking beside Annie, gesturing Annie to enter her consulting room.
(43:13-43:19)	Wide shot – Annie sitting down in patient chair, Dr Uppal sitting down and talking with Annie.
(43:20-43:42)	Mid shot – Dr Uppal asking Annie about her HMB.
(43:43-43:57)	Mid shot – Annie discussing her HMB and treatment with Dr Uppal.
(43:57-44:05)	Wide shot – Camera focusing on Dr Talat Uppal sign on door, Dr Uppal in background sitting and talking with Annie.
(44:06-44:12)	Close up – Medical instrument observing stomach.
(44:13-44:17)	Close up – Ultrasound of stomach.
(44:18-44:22)	Close up – Dr Uppal using ultrasound.
(44:23-44:24)	Wide shot – Dr Uppal examining ultrasound.
(44:25-44:29)	Mid shot – Annie looking at ultrasound on wall.
(44:30-44:33)	Mid shot – Camera panning from Dr Uppal's face to ultrasound on wall behind.
(44:34-44:47)	Wide shot – Dr Uppal examining Annie's stomach with ultrasound.
(44:48-44:53)	Mid shot – Kate opening and closing fridge.
(44:54-45:01)	Wide shot – Kate chopping fruit talking to her daughter, sitting on kitchen bench stool.
(45:02-45:14)	Mid shot – Kate chopping and handing fruit to her daughter, sitting on kitchen bench stool
(45:15-45:27)	Mid shot – Kate's daughter eating apple, smiling at Kate.
(45:28-45:34)	Wide shot – Kate and daughter in kitchen talking and eating fruit with each other.
(45:35-45:49)	Mid shot – Kate standing at edge of trampoline talking to children, jumping on trampoline.
(45:50-46:15)	Wide shot – Kate climbing onto trampoline, jumping with her children.
(46:16-46:26)	Mid shot – Kate smiling, boxing into trainer's gloves.
(46:27-46:34)	Mid shot – Kate's trainer smiling, receiving Kate's punches in gloves.
(46:35-46:49)	Wide shot – Kate boxing with her trainer.
(46:50-46:54)	Mid shot – Photo of Annie in magazine hanging on wall.
(46:55-46:59)	Close up – Books written by Annie displayed on shelf.
(47:00-47:06)	Close up – Camera panning, showcasing books written by Annie.
(47:07-47:12)	Mid shot – Photo of Annie in magazine hanging on wall.
(47:13-47:17)	Close up – Annie's 'Empowering Woman of the Year' award.
(47:18-47:26)	Wide shot – Camera panning across Annie's living room to Annie, sitting at desk, looking at laptop.

(47:27-47:36)	Close up – Camera panning from books written by Annie sitting on table to Annie's face.
(47:37-47:41)	Close up – Annie talking to women on video call on laptop.
(47:42-47:54)	Wide shot – Annie sitting at desk, talking to women on her laptop.
(47:55-48:01)	Mid shot – Camera focusing on microphone and headphones in front of Annie, talking.
(48:02-48:17)	Wide shot – Annie sitting at desk, talking to women on her laptop.
(48:18-48:28)	Mid shot – Annie sitting at dining table, typing on laptop.
(48:29-48:33)	Close up – Annie typing on laptop.
(48:34-48:40)	Extreme close up – Annie smiling, looking away.
(48:41-48:46)	Mid shot – Annie typing on laptop.

ends#

For more information regarding this VNR, please contact:

Kirsten Bruce & Mikaela Dalglish

VIVA! Communications

T 02 9968 3741 / 02 9968 1604

M 0422 074 354 / 0435 996 341

E kirstenbruce@vivacomunications.com.au / mikaela@vivacomunications.com.au