

Proposal to Include Menstruation Characters (Femojis)

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Introduction

SCA have identified that there are currently no recognised characters in Unicode that helpfully and easily represent the physical, mental and material realities of menstruation for women worldwide.







Currently, although menstruation is a core part of being a woman, it is felt to impose significant limitations on women when influenced by negative societal beliefs and taboos. This should be addressed, in all areas of society not least by giving woman a set of recognisable, universal, icons with which to describe it.

It is clear that a set of characters describing the emotions and physical effects of menstruation, which affects 90% of women – equating to around 335 million women globally (source; NHS) - would be welcomed by many women.

Moreover, inclusion of a set of characters dealing with menstruation would help to create a sense of solidarity among women, and would help educate and normalise the subject of women’s health for young people.

1. The characters and the need

The characters suggested for inclusion are:

					
Period	Bloated	Pad	PMS	Spotty	Cramps

These are as yet undefined in a catalogue of characters or symbols. However, the need for them becomes apparent when you look at the use of alternative characters by women to denote the above. A survey carried out for the Metro.co.uk shows how women have appropriated characters of other denominations to describe how they feel during menstruation:

<http://metro.co.uk/2015/01/17/we-asked-the-women-of-yik-yak-whats-your-period-emoji-5024599/>

[Ref 1]

The characters used in this example do not suitably illustrate their points. We require a specific set of characters to more accurately address the subject.

2. Expected usage

There are approximately 373 million women between the menstruating age of 15-49 in the world (source: Population Reference Bureau) of which 47% own a smartphone able to run Emojis (Source: Google smartphone research 2014).

This means there are at least 175, 31 million women around the world who could use Femojis to describe the way they feel when they are menstruating.

A woman's period lasts, on average, between 3 and 5 days. The premenstrual stage lasts, on average 7-14 days. If we take the approximate median of each of those figures (4 and 10 respectively), the relevancy of the proposed Emojis would be 14 days of any given month, or 45% of any given month.

The characters take into account the feelings and symptoms that affect women before and during menstruation.

Given that it is estimated up to 90% of women will suffer at least 1 PMS symptom as part of their monthly cycle (source; NHS), we can reasonably assume there would be a high frequency of usage.

Discussion of periods is an existing behaviour: In just a three week tracking time interval (see below chart), we have identified 199,3k online conversations about menstruating around the world.

This was measured by tracking the words 'Periods', 'my period' and 'time of the months' across all **public online platforms**. This is just a small selection of the wide range of euphemistic terms used to refer to a woman's period, so we can assume that 199,3k conversations is a very conservative estimate, and the reality is likely far higher.

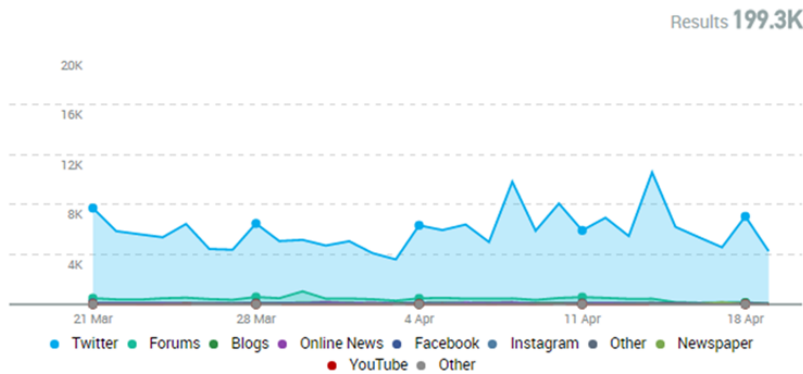
Given the currently taboo nature of the subject matter in society, we can reasonably assume that if we are able to track 119,3k conversations referring to periods on **public platforms**, there will be a far greater number of conversations taking place on **private platforms** – e.g. Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger – where the Emojis would be used.

Moreover, of those public platforms 89,2% of public conversations referring to the three aforementioned terms took place on Twitter.

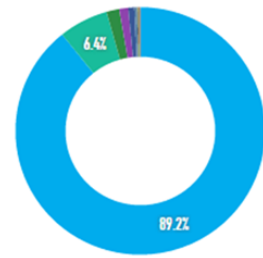
Twitter is a platform that sees a high frequency of Emoji use, owing to its 140 character limit; we can conclude, therefore, that this 89,2% of period related conversations in the tracked 3 week time interval would have been facilitated by the availability of the proposed Emoji set.

RESULTS OVER TIME

by media types



SHARE OF MEDIA TYPES



- 1.3K% Twitter
- 1.1K% Forums
- 636.3% Blogs
- 883.7% Online News
- 1.5K% Facebook
- 2.2K% Instagram
- 628.6% Other
- 1.9K% Newspaper
- 1.9K% YouTube
- 583.3% Other

Source: TalkWalker

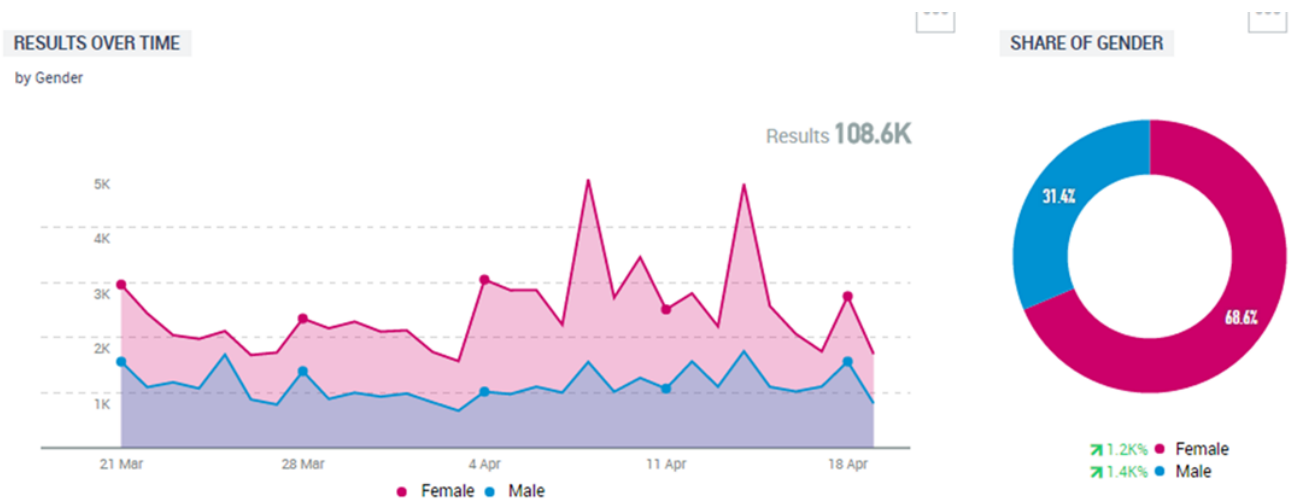
Furthermore, the period discussions tracked in the three week time interval were not restricted by country. As the below chart demonstrates, this is a global phenomenon reaching all continents.

However, given the more conservative nature of some regions, and even more prevalent taboos around women’s menstruation in those regions than others, we can conclude that the frequency of period discussion **private messaging platforms** would be even higher, and more welcome.



Source: Talkwalker

31% of all online menstruation conversations are from men. This demonstrates how Femojis' audience could stretch beyond women.



Source: Talkwalker

There is sufficient research and conversation on this topic to indicate that it is imperative that the issue be addressed at the most basic level, including language and semiotics. In this instance, this means inclusion of a set of recognisable symbols within the Unicode Standard.

“One of the least discussed, yet most pervasive stigmas in gender equality is female menstruation. In every country, the veil of silence around menstruation contributes to sexism that can hold women back in their personal lives and professional careers.”

“The average women menstruates for 3000 days in her lifetime, however the subject is constrained by taboos that prevent girls from learning how to manage their periods hygienically and safely.”

[Ref 2]

This is backed up by WaterAid’s Chief Exec, Barbara Frost’s comment in the Guardian that:

"Taboos surrounding periods can take a heavy toll on the health of girls and women in the developing world. It's time for all of us to start talking about periods and bring an end to the stigma that still surrounds menstruation."

To further test the need for menstruation Emoji we have created a petition to see if the general public agree that there is an immediate requirement:

<https://www.change.org/p/femojis-uk> [Ref 7]

The petition has garnered more than 33,000 signatures so far.

This set of characters are Abstract Characters according to the definition in the Glossary, with all being also defined as Emoji and (🩸) PMS also being defined as an Emoticon. As of the submission date of this proposal they are not included in the Unicode Pipeline Table or BETA. These symbols would benefit women across the globe, semantically identifying shared and unchanging women's health points.

4. Example of Use in Running Text


Below are a number of examples of how the characters could be used in running text conversations:


1. First Day

Person 1: I think I'm going to die!

Person 2: Why?

Person 1: First Day 

Person 2: Ah, I see! Cramps? 

Person 1: Yeah and soooo 

Person 2: Want me to come over?

Person 1: But I'm veeery  and I've got spots 

Person 2: And, I've got icecream!!

2. Leaks

Person 1: Have you ever bled through your 

Person 2: Are you kidding?!? I've bled through  and JEANS!!

Person 1: OMG! Did anyone see?

Person 2: Nah. I just tied my jumper around my waist. Now I just

change my pads more often! 


5. Character Properties

Suggested character properties for the proposed set are given in Tables 1 – 6 and here in Unicode Character Database (UCD) format. The names describe the character as closely as possible. None of the proposed names already appear in the Character Name Index.


They are not locatable in *The Unicode Standard, Version 8.0.0*

```
1F920;PERIOD;So;0;ON;;;;;;;
1F921;BLOATED;So;0;ON;;;;;;;
1F922;PAD;So;0;ON;;;;;;;
1F923;PMS;So;0;ON;;;;;;;
1F924;SPOTTY;So;0;ON;;;;;;;
1F925;CRAMPS;So;0;ON;;;;;;;
```


<u>Property</u>	<u>Suggested Value</u>
Code Point	1F920
Name	PERIOD
General Category	So
Canonical Combining Class	0
Bidirectional Class	ON
Decomposition Type / Decomposition Mapping	
Numeric Value	
Bidi Mirrored	
Unicode 1 Name	
ISO Comment	
Simple Uppercase Mapping	
Simple Lowercase Mapping	
Simple Titlecase Mapping	

Table 1: Suggested character properties for 


Property	Suggested Value
Code Point	1F921
Name	BLOATED
General Category	So
Canonical Combining Class	0
Bidirectional Class	ON
Decomposition Type / Decomposition Mapping	
Numeric Value	
Bidi Mirrored	
Unicode 1 Name	
ISO Comment	
Simple Uppercase Mapping	
Simple Lowercase Mapping	
Simple Titlecase Mapping	

Table 2: Suggested character properties for 


Property	Suggested Value
Code Point	1F922
Name	PAD
General Category	So
Canonical Combining Class	0
Bidirectional Class	ON
Decomposition Type / Decomposition Mapping	
Numeric Value	
Bidi Mirrored	
Unicode 1 Name	
ISO Comment	
Simple Uppercase Mapping	
Simple Lowercase Mapping	
Simple Titlecase Mapping	

Table 3: Suggested character properties for 

Property	Suggested Value
Code Point	1F923
Name	PMS
General Category	So
Canonical Combining Class	0
Bidirectional Class	ON
Decomposition Type / Decomposition Mapping	
Numeric Value	
Bidi Mirrored	
Unicode 1 Name	
ISO Comment	
Simple Uppercase Mapping	
Simple Lowercase Mapping	
Simple Titlecase Mapping	

Table 4: Suggested character properties for 

Property	Suggested Value
Code Point	1F924
Name	SPOTTY
General Category	So
Canonical Combining Class	0
Bidirectional Class	ON
Decomposition Type / Decomposition Mapping	
Numeric Value	
Bidi Mirrored	
Unicode 1 Name	
ISO Comment	
Simple Uppercase Mapping	
Simple Lowercase Mapping	
Simple Titlecase Mapping	

Table 5: Suggested character properties for 

Property	Suggested Value
Code Point	1F925
Name	CRAMPS
General Category	So
Canonical Combining Class	0
Bidirectional Class	ON Decomposition
Type / Decomposition Mapping Numeric Value	
Bidi Mirrored	
Unicode 1 Name ISO	
Comment	
Simple Uppercase Mapping	
Simple Lowercase Mapping	
Simple Titlecase Mapping	

Table 6: Suggested character properties for :



4.2 Positioning with The Unicode Standard

Suggested section new in the *The Unicode Standard, Version 8.0.0* is: Menstruation Symbols

This would logically sit within ‘Symbols’:
<http://www.unicode.org/charts/#symbols>

Under Supplemental Symbols and Pictographs, between Code Points 1F900 – 1F9FF

6. Anticipated Objections

Firstly, and as previously noted, it could be argued that pre-existing symbols can be appropriated to describe symptoms relating to or nuances around menstruation [See Fig 1].

https://twitter.com/trevso_electric/status/326501088448626688

[Fig 3]

The assertion here however is that these characters do not adequately represent their new meaning and are not designed to do so. Moreover, it is clear that the absence of any Unicode characters specifically relating to menstruation is an issue for women who have been driven not only to use inappropriate existing characters but have also begun to create their own.

https://twitter.com/trevso_electric/status/326501088448626688

[Fig 4]

It is clear that were these characters to be included as part of the Unicode Standard they would be used widely and frequently.

Secondly, it's anticipated that the suggested set of characters could be rejected by Unicode because they address a subject that is still not comfortable for some people. This has been referred to as the 'menstrual taboo', it highlights a tendency in society to mystify and marginalise menstruation making it appear crude and shameful. It should however, be addressed openly and considered natural, and celebrated as a fundamental part of womanhood.

I would counter any objection on the basis of propriety by stating that these characters are a necessity for modern life and for modern women all over the world.

An Interesting comment on the 'menstrual taboo' is made here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJUIX-pLoVk>

[Fig 3]

7. Drawing the Characters

The proposed characters are not part of any script and the precise form of their drawing is not critical, however, time and attention has been spent of the design and creation of the set and these are what are being recommended for inclusion.

There is no requirement to mirror any of the symbols for right to left scripts.

8. Sponsors

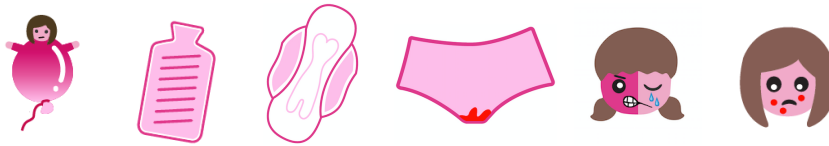
The address for correspondence is:

Rebecca Comer
Building 3
90 Southwark Street
SE1 0SW

rebecca.comer@gmail.com

9. Summary and Conclusion

The characters:



are required by women to adequately represent and express the affect that menstruation has on them. They would be used commonly by women, and would help to educate both women and men in the subject of women's health by placing it in a global, friendly and accessible environment.

References

Ref 1: Common code emojis for a period:

<http://metro.co.uk/2015/01/17/we-asked-the-women-of-yik-yak-whats-your-period-emoji-5024599/>

Ref 2: Chris W Williams WSSCC UN Charity, speaking in the Guardian:

<http://www.theguardian.com/wsscc-partner-zone/2015/mar/13/tackling-the-taboo-of-menstruation>

Ref 3: Barbara Frost, Chief Executive of WaterAid, speaking in the Guardian:

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/may/28/period-misery-schoolgirls-menstruation-sanitation-shame-stigma>

Ref 4: Back in Jan, #periodemoji was trending with people illustrating their cycle in emojis,

e.g. https://twitter.com/trevso_electric/status/326501088448626688

Ref 5: Period emojis that should

exist: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/lorynbrantz/11-period-emojis#.jc4Jop6ad>

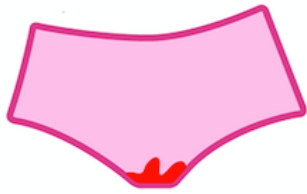
Ref 6: What tampons have to do with Tech:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJUIX-pLoVk>

Ref 7: It's time to get #Femojis in our lives!:

<https://www.change.org/p/femojis-uk>

Menstruation Symbols



**ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2/WG 2
PROPOSAL SUMMARY FORM TO ACCOMPANY SUBMISSIONS
FOR ADDITIONS TO THE REPERTOIRE OF ISO/IEC 10646¹**

Please fill all the sections A, B and C below.

**Please read Principles and Procedures Document (P & P) from ...<http://std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/principles.html>...
for guidelines and details before filling this form.**

Please ensure you are using the latest Form from ...<http://std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/summaryform.html>...

See also ...<http://std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/roadmaps.html>... for latest Roadmaps.

A. Administrative

1. Title:	
2. Requester's name	
3. Requester type	
4. Submission date	
5. Requester's reference (if applicable):	
6. Choose one of the following:	
This is a complete proposal:	Yes
(or) More information will be provided later:	

B. Technical – General

1. Choose one of the following:
 - a. This proposal is for a new script (set of characters):
Proposed name of script:
 - b. The proposal is for addition of characters:
Name of the existing block:
2. Number of characters in proposal:
3. Proposed category (select one from below - see section 2.2 of P&P document):
A-Contemporary B.1-Specialized (small collection) B.2-Specialized (large collection)
C-Major extinct D-Attested extinct E-Minor extinct
F-Archaic Hieroglyphic or Ideographic G-Obscure or questionable usage symbols
4. Is a repertoire including character names provided?
 - a. If YES, are the names in accordance with the "character naming guidelines" in Annex L of P&P document? Yes
 - b. Are the character shapes attached in a legible form suitable for review? Yes
5. Fonts related:
 - a. Who will provide the appropriate computerized font to the Project Editor of 10646 for publishing the standard?

Rebecca Comer
 - b. Identify the party granting a license for use of the font by the editors (include address, e-mail, ftp-site, etc.):

Rebecca Comer (email: comerr@amvbbdo.com)
6. References:
 - a. Are references (to other character sets, dictionaries, descriptive texts etc.) provided? Yes
 - b. Are published examples of use (such as samples from newspapers, magazines, or other sources) of proposed characters attached? No
7. Special encoding issues:
Does the proposal address other aspects of character data processing (if applicable) such as input, presentation, sorting, searching, indexing, transliteration etc. (if yes please enclose information)? Yes
8. Additional Information:
Submitters are invited to provide any additional information about Properties of the proposed Character(s) or Script that will assist in correct understanding of and correct linguistic processing of the proposed character(s) or script. Examples of such properties are: Casing information, Numeric information, Currency information, Display behaviour information such as line breaks, widths etc., Combining behaviour, Spacing behaviour, Directional behaviour, Default Collation behaviour, relevance in Mark Up contexts, Compatibility equivalence and other Unicode normalization related information. See the Unicode standard at ...<http://www.unicode.org>... for such information on other scripts. Also see Unicode Character Database (<http://www.unicode.org/reports/tr44/>) and associated Unicode Technical Reports for information needed for consideration by the Unicode Technical Committee for inclusion in the Unicode Standard.

C. Technical-Justification

1. Has this proposal for addition of character(s) been submitted before? If YES explain	No
2. Has contact been made to members of the user community (for example: National Body, user groups of the script or characters, other experts, etc.)? If YES, with whom? If YES, available relevant documents:	No
3. Information on the user community for the proposed characters (for example: size, demographics, information technology use, or publishing use) is included? Reference:	
4. The context of use f Reference:	
5. Are the proposed ch If YES, where? Reference:	
6. After giving due considerations to the principles in the P&P document must the proposed characters be entirely in the BMP? If YES, is a rationale provided? If YES, reference:	
7. Should the proposed characters be kept together in a contiguous range (rather than being scattered)?	
8. Can any of the proposed characters be considered a presentation form of an existing character or character sequence? If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided? If YES, reference:	No
9. Can any of the proposed characters be encoded using a composed character sequence of either existing characters or other proposed characters? If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided? If YES, reference:	No
10. Can any of the proposed character(s) be considered to be similar (in appearance or function) to, or could be confused with, an existing character? If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided? If YES, reference:	No
11. Does the proposal include use of combining characters and/or use of composite sequences? If YES, is a rationale for such use provided? If YES, reference: Is a list of composite sequences and their corresponding glyph images (graphic symbols) provided? If YES, reference:	No
12. Does the proposal contain characters with any special properties such as control function or similar semantics? If YES, describe in detail (include attachment if necessary)	
1 If YES, reference:	