



Menstrual Hygiene Products

What are menstrual hygiene products?

These are things that can be used to capture blood during your period. They are not medications, and can be purchased without a prescription. They include pads, tampons, menstrual cups, and menstrual underwear.

How do I pick which product is for me?

Each product works a bit differently. Sometimes people use only one of these products, some people use more than one. Some products can be used at the same time. Some of them have to be put inside the vagina which not everyone likes doing. You can try out different products and figure out what works best for you.

What are pads?

These are linings that can be placed inside underwear to capture blood. They come in a variety of lengths, widths and absorbencies depending on the heaviness of your bleeding. Thin ones may be called “panty liners”. Some are disposable while others are reusable. Generally you should change your pad when it is saturated, or at least once every 8 hours.

What are tampons?

These are absorbent materials that go inside the vagina to soak up blood. They may have a plastic or cardboard tube that is used to help place it inside the vagina. Some tampons do not have an applicator, you simply use your fingers to insert the tampon inside your vagina. Tampons have a string at the end so they can be pulled out. Just like pads, they come in different absorbencies. Not everyone feels comfortable placing tampons, and that’s okay. You should make sure not to wear the same tampon for longer than 8 hours.

What are menstrual underwear?

These are underwear which has a lining that functions similar to a pad, by trapping in blood, but also has the added benefit of limiting how much the fluid trapped in it continues to come in contact with your skin. These underwear come in different styles, patterns and capacities to hold blood. Instead of wearing a pad, you can just wear underwear. You can wear the same pair safely all day long (unless you soak through and need to change). When you take it off you can wash and reuse. There are also swimsuits which have a similar lining for swimmers who are on their period. They can be safely worn while in the water.

What are menstrual cups?

These are reusable flexible collection cups that sit at the top of the vagina around the cervix to catch blood. There are different sizes, and some are stiffer than others (which can be better when you are physically active). Inserting and removing them can be a bit tricky the first few times, so it is important to watch a video or ask your doctor about how to do it. When you remove the cup you pour the blood into the toilet. It’s also important to wash them in between each use, and after each period. Cups can be left inside your vagina for up to 12 hours.

One study showed a higher rate of intrauterine device (IUD) expulsion among patients using menstrual cups. So, if you have an IUD, you may want to consider using other menstrual hygiene products.