

Product: Tampon



What is it?

A cylinder wad of cotton and rayon mix with a string to remove it after use. The material is often bleached, dyed and glued, with some brands being scented.



How is it used?

These are inserted into the vagina to absorb the flow of menstrual blood. Some come with applicators, some do not. Applicators help the tampon to be inserted then are disposed of.

They should be changed and put in a bin every 4-8 hours. They must be changed at least every 8 hours to avoid the small risk of an infection.



Key points

Practice may be needed; some young people find them uncomfortable or tricky to use to start with.

They can be used when swimming and can feel more comfortable and secure when exercising.

Reusable applicators are available to reduce waste.



Price

Approximately £1.50 - £3 for a box of 20.



Interesting fact:

Very early versions were made of anything that was absorbent such as wool, with records showing these were used in Ancient Egypt and Rome. The modern-day version was designed in 1929.



Product: Menstrual cups



Interesting fact:

The first version of what we see today came onto the market in 1937.



What is it?

A reusable silicon or latex egg-cup shaped vessel. Menstrual cups come in different sizes and can be used for years if well looked after.



How is it used?

The cup is inserted into the vagina to collect menstrual blood and can be left in place for up to 10 -12 hours. They must be emptied at least twice a day and cleaned thoroughly between uses to avoid the small risk of an infection. They should also be sterilised regularly, especially between periods.



Key points

There are different designs, so it sometimes takes experimentation to find the right one. It's best to select a cup specifically designed for young women when first using them.

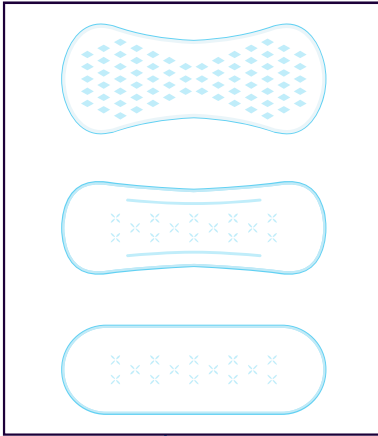
The fitting technique takes practice as a seal needs to be created in the vagina for them to work correctly. This seal prevents leaks so they can be worn when swimming.

The 'tail' can be cut to size.



Price

A menstrual cup costs approximately £10 - £15.



Product: Disposable towels/pads



Interesting fact:

The first commercial disposable pad was available in 1888, but it was too expensive for many to use.

On average, someone who uses disposable pads will use 12,000 pads over their lifetime.



What is it?

Rectangular or tapered rectangular pieces of compressed material that are attached to the inside of pants with a glue strip. Some have 'wings' to help secure them in place and prevent leaks onto clothing. Some brands use bleached materials and perfumes within the pad.



How is it used?

These come in a variety of thicknesses, absorbencies and lengths, depending on the purpose of use (e.g. day, night) and the heaviness of the flow and should be changed approximately every 4 -6 hours. They can be used with other products for added protection from leaks.



Key points

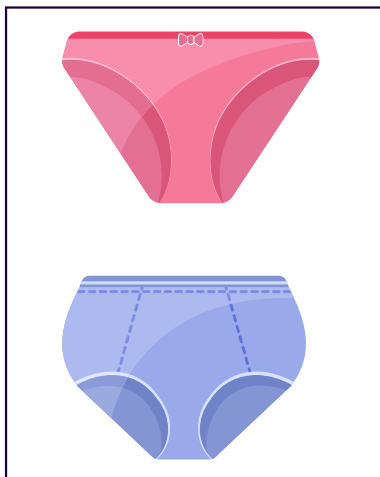
These are often a good product for those new to menstruation as they are easy to use and are widely available.

Most come in a plastic wrapper that, when changing pads, should be used to wrap the old one before disposing of it in a bin.



Price

Approximately £1- £1.50 for a pack of 10.



Product: Period pants



What is it?

Layers of cotton and waterproof material are combined into reusable absorbent and leak-proof pants.



How is it used?

These come in a range of sizes and styles. Some are absorbent so can be worn all day before changing and require no other menstrual products. Some are only leak-proof and are designed to be worn with another menstrual product.



Interesting fact:

These are a relatively new invention and were only developed in 2013. They were introduced to the UK in 2018.



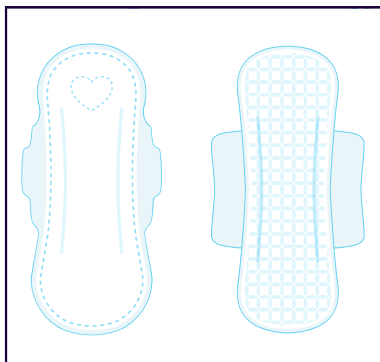
Key points

These can be great for comfort when exercising but are not useable when swimming.



Price

Approximately £25 per pair of pants.



Product: Reusable towels/pads



What is it?

A pad of similar design to disposable pads but made from cotton and toweling materials and held in place around pants by a popper or Velcro.



How is it used?

They are worn in the same way as disposable pads/towels so should be changed regularly; every 4-6 hours. They need to be rinsed before being washed thoroughly.



Key points

Usually, someone would have a set of several reusable pads to change throughout the day. If looked after carefully they can be reused for many years.



Price

They are now widely available through online shops, costing approximately £5 per reusable pad.



Interesting fact:

The first pads were reusable ones made of wood pulp and rags; before that, rags, cotton or sheep's wool were used.