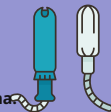


FEMININE HYGIENE 101



1 Tampons

1. Wash your hands thoroughly before application.
2. Remove the tampon from its packaging.
3. Tug on the string to ensure that it is secure.
4. Sit or stand in a comfortable position.
5. Hold the tampon with the fingers you write with.
6. Explore your body with your fingers to find your vagina.
7. Press the tip of the tampon into your vagina.
8. Push the plunger in with your index finger.



The general recommendation is to change a tampon every 4 to 6 hours, depending on the flow.

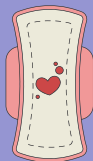
Leaving a tampon in for more than 8 hours can increase the risk of infection or irritation, including the rare but serious condition of toxic shock syndrome. It is important to follow the instructions on the tampon package and use the lowest absorbency needed.

You can wear a pad in addition to a tampon for added protection.

Sanitary PADS or Panty Liners

2

Sanitary Pads, sanitary napkins, or panty liners are absorbent items worn in your underwear during menstruation. The underside of the pad has a sticky adhesive that sticks to the underwear. Most sanitary pads have "wings" that fold over the edges of the underwear to help keep it in place and prevent leaks.



You can also wear these items in addition to products like a tampon or menstrual cup for added protection.

3 Menstrual Cups



A menstrual cup is a small, flexible cup that you insert into your vagina. Instead of absorbing your period flow, like a tampon or pad, the cup catches and collects your flow. After 8 to 12 hours, you remove the cup and wash it out for reuse. It's sometimes known as a period cup.

The menstrual cup looks like a small bowl with a little stem on the end. Menstrual cups come in different sizes and materials. You'll see them mostly sold in small and large sizes.

- Small: For people with a light to medium flow, who are under 30 or who haven't had a baby.
- Large: For people with a heavy flow, over age 30, or who have had a baby.
- Some companies also offer a "teen" size that is smaller than the small size, and/or an extra-large size.

Most period cups are made of silicone. However, some are made of rubber, so if you're allergic to latex, buy one that's made of silicone. They also come in different shapes:

- V-shape: The cup is longer than it is wide. It tapers gradually from the rim. This is the most popular design.
- Bell-shape: The cup is rounder than the V-shape, flaring out from the rim. It is longer than it is wide.
- Round: The cup is wider than it is long, with the widest point of the vessel being below the rim.
- Asymmetrical: The cup has a slanted edge to sit at a certain rotation and angle under the cervix. It is longer than it is wide.



4

Supplemental Products



Here's the thing, none of these products are necessary but are for convenience and added comfort.

- **Feminine Hygiene Wipes:** Your best option is an unscented wipe with a neutral pH. These are good options for a refresh and keeping the mess at bay.
- **Period Underwear:** An option for comforted protection in lieu of traditional supplies.
- **Feminine Hygiene washes/soaps:** Most options are gentle and geared towards sensitive skin. When exploring this option look for products that are: dermatologist-tested, gynecologist-recommended, hypoallergenic and fragrance-free.



Understanding your Cycle:

- The menstrual cycle is counted from the first day of one period to the first day of the next. The cycle isn't the same for everyone.
- Menstrual bleeding might happen every 21 to 35 days and last 2 to 7 days. For the first few years after menstruation begins, long cycles are common. However, menstrual cycles tend to shorten and become more regular as people age.
- It is normal for some discomfort, but this should be able to be remedied with a hot compress on the lower abdomen or a monitored dose of an over-the-counter medication. Anything above this, it is best to reach out to your doctor.
- If you go more than 2 months without a cycle, it is best to reach out to your doctor.

How can I track my menstrual cycle?

To find out what's typical for you, start keeping a record of your menstrual cycle on a calendar. Begin by tracking your start date every month for several months in a row to identify the regularity of your periods.

If you're worried about your periods, also track the following every month:

- **End date.** How long does your period typically last? Is it longer or shorter than usual?
- **Flow.** Record the heaviness of your bleeding. Does it seem lighter or heavier than usual? How often do you need to change your tampon or pad? Have you passed any blood clots?
- **Bleeding changes.** Are you bleeding in between periods?
- **Pain.** Describe any pain you have with your period. Does the pain feel worse than usual? It is not unusual to have some cramping or pain with your periods.
- **Other changes.** Have you noticed any changes in your mood or behavior? Did anything new happen around the time you noticed changes in your periods?

Information in this handout is made available by Mayo Clinic. Please contact your Primary Care Physician or OBGYN before making any life altering medical decisions. Don't have a primary care provider? Connect with a CVHD Community Health Worker today.

