

Female Athlete Education.

MANAGING MY PERIOD:

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?



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Hello!

Got your first-ever period? New to using period products? Don't worry, we've got you!

In this booklet, we'll be discussing the different types of period products available, including how they work, how to use them, and when to change them, to help you manage your period better!

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Period product #1

PADS

What are pads?

Pads are probably the first-ever period product you will use and they are one of the easiest period products out there! Pads are made of absorbent material that you simply stick to the inside of your underwear to absorb your period blood as it comes out of the vagina.



How to use:

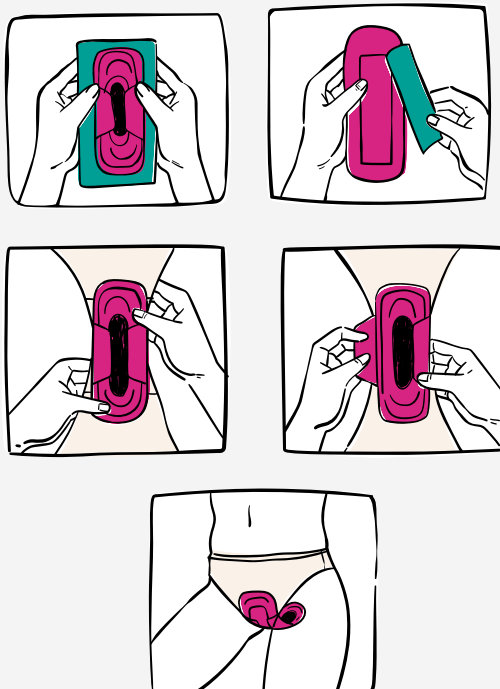
Simply remove the pad from the packaging, peel away the paper covering the sticky adhesive backing, and stick the pad onto the inside of your underwear. Reusable pads can be attached to your underwear using buttons.

Variations:

Some pads have wings (which fold over the edges of your underwear to prevent leaking) and some don't. There are also light, regular, heavy, and super heavy/night pads. **Choose what type works best for your blood flow.**

When to change:

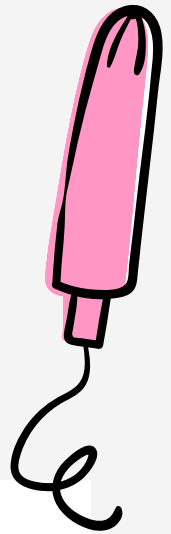
For hygiene reasons, aim to change your pad roughly every **4-8 hours**. However, how often you need to change your pad will be dependent on your blood flow (see page 'Go with your flow'). Put a new pad on before bed and change it first thing in the morning.



TAMPONS

What are tampons?

Tampons are another very common period product. These are cylindrical and are made of compacted, soft, cotton (or other fibres) material. A tampon has to be inserted into your vagina where it sits and absorbs period blood before it comes out of your vagina.



How to use:

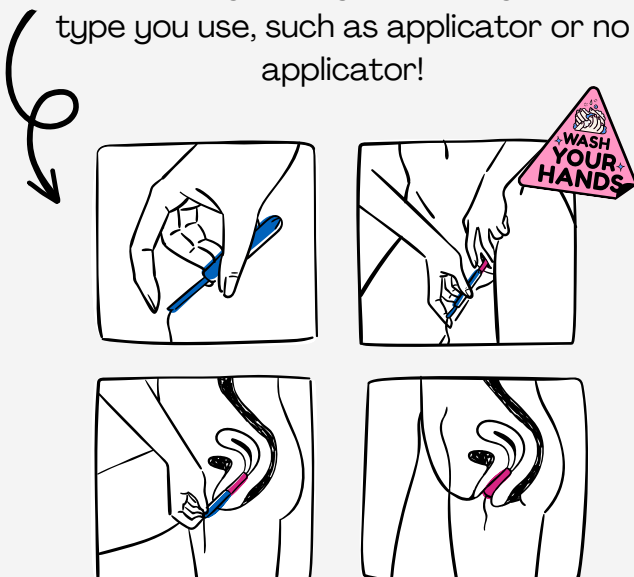
First, find a comfortable position. Gently insert the tampon into the vagina (cotton bit first) and using your index finger, push the applicator towards you. To remove, gently pull on the string that hangs out of your vagina.

Variations:

There are two main types - ones with an applicator and ones without (to insert these use your finger instead). There are also light, regular, super, super plus/ultra tampons.

Choose what type works best for your blood flow.

*Please note: the method for inserting a tampon might vary depending on the type you use, such as applicator or no applicator!



When to change:

For hygiene and to prevent infection, change your tampon every **4-8 hours**. However, how often you need to change your tampon will be dependent on your blood flow (see page 'Go with your flow'). You can use a tampon overnight (but **not for more than 8 hours**).

PERIOD KNICKERS

What are period knickers?

Period knickers are new to the period product scene but they are very easy and simple to use. They are just like your regular underwear except they contain extra, absorbent layers of fabric which allows them to absorb menstrual blood.



How to use:

Period knickers are worn like regular underwear. After use, you can rinse them and then throw them into the washing machine with the rest of your laundry (your other clothes will be fine!). After washing, hang them up to air dry.



*Please note: try not to use fabric softeners in the wash as they can reduce the absorbency of your knickers!

Variations:

Period knickers come in lots of different sizes, styles, and absorbencies (such as light, moderate and heavy). Whilst they can be used on their own, period knickers can also be used as a backup for tampons and menstrual cups.

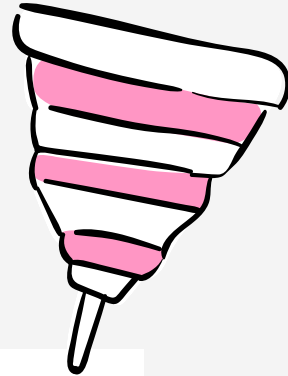
When to change:

To prevent leaks and maintain good hygiene, change your period knickers every **8 hours** (depending on your blood flow and the absorbency of the period knickers you're using). Put a new pair on before bed and change them first thing in the morning.

MENSTRUAL CUP

What is a menstrual cup?

Menstrual cups are small, egg-shaped cups made from flexible materials, like medical grade silicone that you insert into the vagina. They work like tampons in that they sit inside of the body. But, rather than absorbing blood, cups collect the blood to be disposed of later.



How to use:

Find a comfortable position. Fold the cup whichever way makes inserting the cup easier. Insert cup with your fingers into vagina. Once inserted the cup will open. Next, rotate the cup to create a seal. To remove, break the suction seal by pinching the cup.

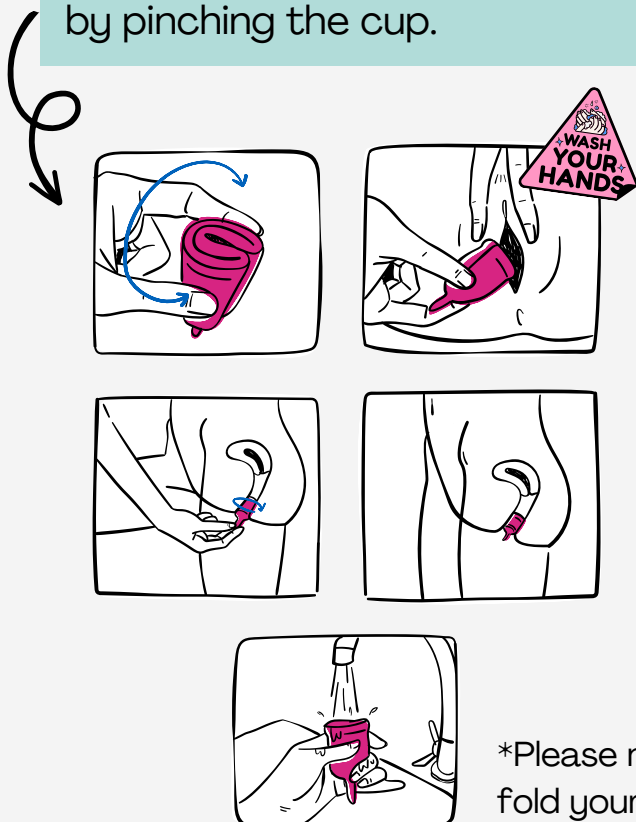
Variations:

Most brands offer multiple sizes/types. You might find that different sizes/types of menstrual cup feel better at different times during your period, or you might use different ones for different activities. **It's best to check the brand for advice here!**

When to change:

Empty, rinse out (with clean water), and reinsert your menstrual cup every **8-12 hours** (depending on your blood flow).

Remember to sanitise (in boiling water) your cup at the end of your period. Tip: When starting out, check your cup regularly to learn how full it gets.



*Please note: there are lots of different ways to fold your menstrual cup - we've used a C fold here!

Period products

GO WITH YOUR FLOW

How often you change your period product will be dependent on your blood flow (and this can change each day). Most period product packaging will contain the symbols below to indicate its absorbency.

Choose the appropriate absorbency for your blood flow.



Light: for lighter flow days (like the end of your period)



Medium: for regular flow days (like the middle of your period)



Heavy: for heavier flow days (like the start of your period)



Super heavy/overnight: these can manage flow overnight

*These symbols might differ dependent on brand so always check the specific details of the brand you're using!

Reminder: Days when you're active/playing your sport you might need to change your period product more often for hygiene reasons!

Will I need the same period product each day?


No, your blood flow/ period product preference can change throughout your period. Some days it might be heavy and other days it might be light. Therefore, it is important to **choose a period product that is right for you that day**, and this is likely to change day-to-day whilst you're bleeding!

Heavy menstrual bleeding:

This refers to abnormally heavy periods that interfere with your life. A good way to help you know if you have heavy periods is **needing to change super pads and tampons roughly every 2 hours (or less)**. If you notice this, it's best to inform someone you trust so you can get the help you need!

Period products

SUMMARY TABLE

	Pads	Tampons	Period Knickers	Menstrual Cups
Ease of use	Easy	Moderate	Easy	Difficult
Absorbency				
How long can they be used for?	4-8 hours <small>*dependent on type used</small>	4-8 hours <small>*dependent on type used</small>	~8 hours <small>*dependent on type used</small>	8-12 hours
Suitable for sport?	Yes, most sports but not all water-based sports	Yes, all sports	Yes, most sports but not all water-based sports	Yes, all sports
Inside or outside the body?	Outside	Inside	Outside	Inside
Reusable?	No, but you can get reusable pads	No, but you can get reusable applicators	Yes	Yes

Period products

FLOWCHART

Want an easy and fun way to discover the best period product for you? Follow the flowchart below to **find your best match!**



Period leaks often happen in sport and shouldn't be something to be embarrassed about or ashamed of!

Inside OR outside?

Inside

Outside

Tampon fan?

Pad fan?

YES

NO

YES

NO

Worry about **leaks** whilst playing sport?

YES

NO



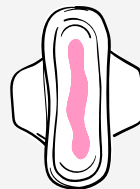
Try a **menstrual cup** (it is also reusable!)



Tampon it is! If you're eco conscious, try a reusable tampon applicator!



Pad it is!



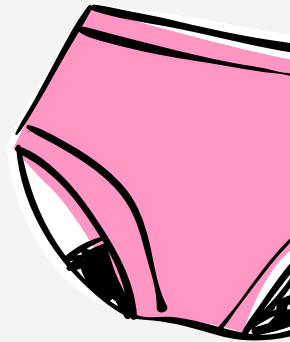
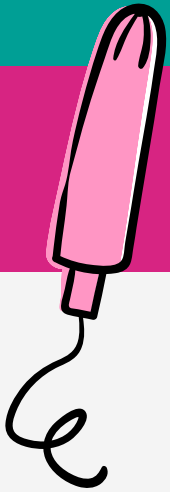
Yes, but eco-conscious? Try a **reusable pad!**

Try **period knickers!** They offer better protection from leaks and might be more comfortable whilst playing some sports!



A fan of pads and tampons but worried about **access to toilets / sanitary bins** whilst playing sports? Then try disposal bags for tampons and pads that seal closed to ensure easy and hygienic disposal wherever you are!

*You can also double up and use a pad or period knickers with a tampon!



For more Female Athlete
Education Resources see:
Website: www.SHEresearch.ie
Twitter: @SHEResearch_TUS

**Or scan the QR code (to the right) for
more information**

