

# Periods

## Managing Periods

- It is normal to lose between 2-3 tablespoons of blood during your period, but some people lose more period fluid compared to other people. This is sometimes called your flow. If you have a heavy flow, you lose more fluid on your period. If you have a light flow, you lose less fluid on your period.



## Period Hygiene Products

- When you have your period, you are expected to use products that absorb the period fluid. If you do not use products to absorb the fluid, it could leak through your clothing and cause messes.
- There are many different types of period hygiene products that you can use. You may like to use some types of products more than others. Everyone has different preferences. Some factors to consider when choosing products include:
  - comfort
  - level of absorbency
  - purchasing availability
  - cost
  - ease of use
  - style
  - environmental impact




**Watch these videos to learn about different types of period hygiene products:**

- [Period Hygiene: Tampons, Pads and Menstrual Cups](#)
- [An introduction to period products for children with autism and intellectual disability](#)



## Period Hygiene Products

Use the table below to explore and learn about a variety of period hygiene products

<p><b>Disposable Menstrual Pad:</b> A disposable menstrual pad is soft and absorbent. It collects blood that comes out of your vagina. The back of the pad has a sticky side that attaches to your underwear. They can be used one time.</p>	
<p><b>Reusable Menstrual Pad:</b> Reusable menstrual pads are soft and absorbent cloth pads. They collect blood that comes out of your vagina during your period. They are held in place with wings that have snap buttons on them. You have to wash the pad before you can reuse them.</p>	
<p><b>Period Underwear:</b> Period underwear are underwear that have moisture-wicking fabric that absorb period fluid. They look and act a lot like regular underwear but stop blood from leaking onto your clothes.</p>	

## Period Hygiene Products

Use the table below to explore and learn about a variety of period hygiene products

<p><b>Menstrual Cup:</b> A menstrual cup is a flexible, funnel-shaped cup that is inserted into your vagina to collect period fluid. Menstrual cups are reusable.</p>	
<p><b>Menstrual Disc:</b> A menstrual disc is a flexible, disc-shaped product that is inserted into your vagina to collect period fluid. There are reusable or disposable menstrual discs on the market.</p>	
<p><b>Tampon:</b> A tampon is a “plug” of soft and absorbent material. A tampon is inserted into your vagina to collect blood. They can be used one time.</p>	

Provider note: The products above are inserted into the vagina. These tasks require good body positioning, coordination, functional cognition, and understanding of anatomy. If a young person is having challenges in these areas but would like to use one of the options above, consider providing

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## Disposable Pads

- A disposable menstrual pad is soft and absorbent. It collects blood that comes out of your vagina. The back of the pad has a sticky side that attaches to your underwear. They can be used one time.



## How to Put on a Disposable Pad

1. Find a pad and go to the bathroom.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Go to the toilet. Pull your bottoms (pants and underwear) to your knees and sit down.
4. Remove the pad from its packaging. Unfold the pad.
5. *If you are already wearing a used pad*, remove it from your underwear. Roll it up and wrap it in the packaging of your new pad. Throw it in the trash bin. Never flush a pad down the toilet.
6. Peel the paper from the back of the pad.
7. Place the sticky back of the pad on your underwear.
8. *If your pad has wings*, peel off the paper from the wings. Fold the wings around your underwear.
9. Throw away any packaging into the trash bin.
10. Pull up your underwear and bottoms.
11. You are done! You have put on a pad. Wash your hands before you leave the restroom. Remember to change your pad frequently.

### Watch this video to learn more about using pads:

- [An introduction to using pads for periods for children with intellectual disability and autism](#)



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## Special Considerations: Disposable Pads



- Use marker on the underwear to show where the pad should be placed.
- A pad needs to be removed every 4-8 hours depending on your flow.
- You will see period fluid collect on the pad. This can help you to see if the pad is full and needs to be changed. However, seeing the period fluid can feel scary for some people. Remember that having your period is healthy and normal. Try a different type of product if this feels too scary.
- A disposable menstrual pad is put into the garbage after use.
- Pads come in different sizes and levels of absorbency.
- Pads soak up liquids. They cannot be worn while swimming because they will swell up.
- The pad (usually a cotton material) sits against your skin. This can feel uncomfortable for some people, especially at first. Try on pads before menarche or try thinner pads at first to get used to the feeling on your skin.
- Some pads are scented. The scent can be overwhelming for some people. The purpose of the added scent is to cover up odors from the period fluid. Periods are not dirty, but a foul smell can happen if you wear your pad too long. Remember to change your pad frequently.

### Watch this video to learn more about using pads:

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## Reusable Menstrual Pads

- Reusable menstrual pads are soft and absorbent. They are usually made of cloth. They collect blood that comes out of your vagina during your period. They are held in place with wings that have snap buttons on them. You have to wash the pad before you can reuse them.

## How to Use a Reusable Menstrual Pad

1. Find a pad and go to the bathroom.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Go to the toilet. Pull your bottoms (pants and underwear) to your knees and sit down.
4. *If you are already wearing a used pad, remove it from your underwear. Roll it up and place it in a wet bag.*
5. Place the pad on your underwear. Secure the wings of the pads around your underwear.
6. Pull up your underwear and bottoms.
7. You are done! You have put on a pad. Wash your hands before you leave the restroom. Remember to change your pad frequently.

**Watch this video to learn about reusable menstrual pads:**

- [Reusable Cloth Pads for Beginners](#)



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## Special Considerations: Reusable Menstrual Pads



- Compared to disposable products, investing in reusable menstrual pads can save money long-term because you will not have to re-purchase them as frequently.
- Reusable menstrual pads come in different colors and patterns. It may be easier to find gender-neutral reusable menstrual pads compared to traditional disposable pads found in stores.
- Dark or black reusable menstrual pads can be helpful for camouflaging the sight of blood.
- Quality reusable menstrual pads can be just as absorbent as disposable pads. They should be changed every 4-8 hours depending on your blood flow.
- Reusable pads do not have the same type of sticky surface that disposable pads have. Instead, the wings usually have snap buttons. The snap buttons require more fine motor strength and dexterity than sticky wings.
- Reusable pads are not as easily accessible as disposable pads or tampons. Most people order them online.
- Using reusable pads requires extra care. They need to be washed (either hand washed or in the machine depending on the type). If you change your pad away from home, you have to keep the used pad with you. Used pads can be stored in “wet bags” until they can be washed and cleaned.

**Watch this video to learn about reusable menstrual pads:**

- [Reusable Cloth Pads for Beginners](#)



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## Period Underwear

- Period underwear are underwear that have moisture-wicking fabric that absorb period fluid. They look and act a lot like regular underwear but stop blood from leaking onto your clothes.



## How to Use Period Underwear

1. Period underwear can be worn like regular underwear.
2. Find a clean pair of period underwear.
3. Go to the bathroom and go to the toilet. Pull your bottoms (pants and underwear) down to your knees. Sit on the toilet.
4. Remove the underwear that you are already wearing.
  - a. You may need to take off your shoes to make it easier to slip your feet through your pants and underwear.
  - b. Put your used underwear into a wet bag.
5. Put on your clean underwear. Put your pants and shoes back on.
6. You are done! You have put on your period underwear. Remember to change your underwear frequently. Wash your hands before leaving the restroom.

**Watch this video about period underwear:** [An introduction to period underwear for children with intellectual disability and autism](#)





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## Special Considerations: Period Underwear

- Most period underwear can be washed in a washing machine cold water on a delicate setting with mild detergent. You can even wash them with other clothes. You can help prevent stains by rinsing with cold water after being used. Check the packaging of your underwear for specific drying instructions.
- You can find adaptive period underwear online that have side openings to make removing and changing the underwear easier. The side openings usually have snap buttons.
- Period underwear comes in different colors, patterns, and styles. You can find gender-neutral period underwear online.
- Period underwear is not as easy to find in convenience stores compared to tampons or pads, but you will find a variety of period underwear options online.
- Purchasing period underwear can save money in the long run compared to purchasing disposable period products.
- Period underwear can be used in place of other period products. However, some people who have heavier period flow will wear period underwear for extra protection while also using an insertable menstrual product like a tampon.
- Period underwear have different levels of absorbency. Some types can absorb up to one tampon's worth of period fluid. If you have a heavier flow, you will need to change your underwear more frequently.
- Depending on the color of your period underwear, you might see period fluid and blood collect onto the underwear. Being able to see the blood collect can be helpful for knowing when to change the underwear. Seeing the blood can feel scary for some people. Sometimes it is helpful to remember that having your period is healthy and normal. The blood does not mean that you are hurt. If it feels too scary to see the period fluid, you can use darker underwear that will camouflage the fluid.

**Watch this video to learn more about period underwear:** [An introduction to period underwear for children with intellectual disability and autism](#)



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## Menstrual Cups

- A menstrual cup is a flexible, funnel-shaped cup that is inserted into your vagina to collect period fluid. Menstrual cups are reusable.



## How to Use a Menstrual Cup

1. Go to the bathroom and wash your hands.
2. Go to the toilet. Pull your bottoms (pants and underwear) down to your knees.
3. *If you are already wearing a menstrual cup*, use your fingers to locate the stem of your cup inside your vagina. Do not pull on the stem. Locate the ribbed base of your cup just above the stem.
  - a. Hold the base of the cup. Slowly wiggle the cup out of your vaginal opening.
  - b. Empty the cup into the toilet. Rinse the cup in cold water. Use warm water and unscented soap to wash the cup. Dry the cup with toilet paper.
  - c. You are ready to insert the cleaned cup.
4. Fold the cup. It is flexible enough to be folded into a small and narrow shape.
5. Use your other hand to hold your labia apart. Gently insert the cup into your vaginal opening until it is fully inside of your vagina.
6. Gently pull on the cup to make sure that there is a suction-like seal. You are done! You have inserted a menstrual cup. Remember to change your cup frequently. Wash your hands before leaving the bathroom.

**Watch this video about menstrual cups:** [An introduction to menstrual cups for children with intellectual disability and autism](#)



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## Special Considerations: Menstrual Cups

- Change your menstrual cup every 10-12 hours. Menstrual cups usually do not need to be changed as quickly as pads or tampons because they can hold more fluid.
- Compared to disposable products, investing in reusable menstrual cups can save money long-term because you will not have to re-purchase them as frequently. They can last for several years depending on the brand or if you take good care of them or not. You should purchase a new cup if you see holes or tears on yours.
- Inserting, removing, and cleaning a menstrual cup can be tricky. You can practice and build skills to help with learning how to do these tasks. You can also use different types of products.
- Your reusable menstrual cup can be rinsed between uses while on your period. Sanitize the menstrual cup in boiling water for 3-5 minutes after your period is finished.
- You can swim while using a menstrual cup.
- You will not be able to see the period fluid collect.
- When inserted correctly, you will not feel the menstrual cup throughout the day.

**Watch this video about menstrual cups:** [An introduction to menstrual cups for children with intellectual disability and autism](#)



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## Menstrual Discs

- A menstrual disc is a flexible, disc shaped product that is inserted into your vagina to collect period fluid. There are reusable or disposable menstrual discs on the market.

## How to Use a Menstrual Disc

1. Go to the bathroom and wash your hands.
2. Go to the toilet and pull down your bottoms (pants and underwear) down to your knees.
3. *If you are already wearing a menstrual disc*, put a finger into your vaginal opening. Slide your finger inside your vagina until you feel the disc.
  - a. Hold onto the rim of the disc. Slowly pull the disc out.
  - b. Empty the cup into the toilet.
    - i. *If you have a disposable disc*, wrap it in toilet paper and throw it away in the trash bin. Never flush a menstrual disc in the toilet.
    - ii. *If you have a reusable disc*, rinse it in cold water. Use warm water and unscented soap to wash the disc. Dry the disc with toilet paper. You are ready to insert the clean disc.
4. Use one hand to pinch and fold the disc. It is flexible enough to be folded into a narrow shape that can be inserted into your vagina.
5. Use one hand to hold your labia apart. Gently slide the disc into your vagina with your other hand. Gently tuck the rim of the disc behind your pubic bone.
6. You are done! You have inserted a menstrual disc. Remember to change your disc frequently. Wash your hands before leaving the restroom.

**Watch this video about menstrual discs:**

[How to Insert a Menstrual Disc](#)



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## Special Considerations: Menstrual Discs

- When inserted correctly, you will not feel the menstrual disc throughout the day.
- Some brands have options like strings, loops, or notches in them to make removing the disc easier.
- Menstrual discs can be worn safely for up to 12 hours.
- You can swim while using a menstrual disc.
- Inserting, removing, and cleaning a menstrual disc can be tricky. You can practice and build skills to help with learning how to do these tasks. You can also use different types of products.
- Reusable menstrual discs need to be cleaned. They usually need to be rinsed and washed with a mild cleanser between uses. Sanitize your menstrual disc after your period is finished by placing the disc in boiling water for 3-5 minutes. Read the packaging for specific cleaning instructions because each brand may have different requirements.
- Read the packaging of your reusable menstrual disc to find out when you should replace your disc. Some menstrual discs can last up to 5-10 years with proper care.
- You can have penetrative vaginal sex while wearing a menstrual disc.
- Purchasing reusable menstrual discs can save money in the long run compared to purchasing disposable period products.

**Watch this video about menstrual discs:**

[How to Insert a Menstrual Disc](#)

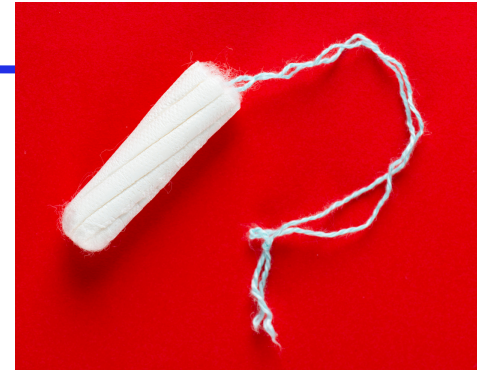




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## Tampons

- A tampon is a “plug” of soft and absorbent material. A tampon is inserted into your vagina to collect blood. They can be used one time.



## How to Use a Tampon

1. Find a tampon and go to the bathroom.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Go to the toilet. Pull your bottoms (pants and underwear) to your knees and sit down or squat toward the toilet.
4. *If you are already wearing a tampon*, gently pull on the string to remove the tampon from your vagina. Wrap the used tampon in toilet paper and toss it in the trash bin. Never flush your tampon down the toilet.
5. Remove the tampon from its packaging.
6. Use your dominant hand to hold the applicator. Keep your hand on the smaller part of the applicator.
7. Gently put the applicator inside of your vagina at a slight angle. Aim toward your lower back. Continue to slowly insert the applicator until your finger touches your vulva.
8. Use your pointer finger to gently push the plunger all the way. This will release the tampon.
9. Pull the applicator out. A string will be sticking out of your vagina.
10. Throw away the applicator into the trash bin.
11. You are done! You have inserted a tampon. Wash your hands before leaving the restroom. Remember to change your tampon frequently.

**Watch this video about tampons:** [An introduction to using tampons for children with intellectual disability and autism](#)



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## Special Considerations: Tampons

- A tampon is disposable. It is thrown into the garbage after use.
- If inserted correctly, you will not feel the tampon throughout the day.
- You can swim while wearing a tampon because the absorbent material does not come into contact with the water.
- You will not see period fluid collect onto the tampon until you remove it.
- Inserting and removing a tampon can be tricky. You can practice and build skills to help with learning how to do these tasks. You can also use different types of products.
- There are a variety of tampon sizes and levels of absorbency. Light or lower absorbency tampons are easier to insert because they are smaller. However, they collect less period fluid.
- A tampon needs to be removed every 4-8 hours depending on your blood flow.
- Some tampons are scented. The scent can be overwhelming for some people. The purpose of the added scent is to cover up odors from the period fluid. Periods are not dirty, but a foul smell can happen if you wear your tampon too long. Remember to change your tampon frequently.
- If you have difficulty gripping the tampon string for removal, tie a loop at the end of a tampon string.

**Watch this video about tampons:** [An introduction to using tampons for children with intellectual disability and autism](#)



# Period Hygiene Kit

## What is a period hygiene kit?

- A period hygiene kit is a small bag or pouch that you can make to use when you need to change your period hygiene products.



- You can keep one or several kits anywhere that you would like, including your vehicle, school, or work.
- Some people like to carry the kit to the bathroom every time they need to change their period hygiene products to keep other people from seeing things like their tampons or pads. It is okay to keep these private. Remember that having a period should not make you feel embarrassed. It is healthy and normal!
- Period hygiene kits can be helpful to have if you begin your period earlier than you expected to.

## What to put in a period hygiene kit:

Your kit should have items that you like to use while on your period. Here are some items that some people like to keep in their kits:

- Period hygiene products: tampons, pads, period underwear, menstrual discs, menstrual cups
- A clean pair of underwear
- Wet wipes
- Over-the-counter pain medications

What else would you put into your kit? \_\_\_\_\_

# Period Hygiene Products: Sensory Strategies

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- **Touch:**

- The feeling of pads on the skin can be distressing to some people, especially for people who are sensitive to touch. Try to gradually introduce the material to the skin.
  - Start with thinner pads or panty liners. Work your way up to more absorbent pads if tolerated.
  - Practice wearing pads before menarche occurs.
- Use period underwear or hygiene products that are inserted into the vagina (tampon, disc, cup) if the feeling of pads against the skin is too distressing.
- If wet touch is tolerable and comforting, try wet wipes for cleaning and wiping the perineal area. Microwave the wet wipes (at least 5 at a time) in a sealed zip lock bag for 5 seconds.

- **Smell:**

- Explore preferences for scented versus unscented disposable pads and/or tampons.
- If tolerable, use relaxing essential oils to cover up non-preferred smells in the restroom.

- **Sight:**

- Use dark/black reusable pads or underwear to minimize the visibility of period fluid.

- **Sound:**

- Some disposable menstrual products come in loud packaging that can trigger auditory sensitivities.
  - Try brands that use thin fiber packaging that makes less noise.
  - Have a support person place the pad onto clean underwear.
- Public restrooms can be a loud place. This can be challenging for people with auditory sensitivities.
  - Put stickers or sticky notes on the sensor of automatic toilets in public restrooms.
  - Find and consistently use a restroom at school that is more private or quiet. Familiarity and privacy can be comforting.