

Why use Reusable Menstrual Products?

Money saving.

Take an estimate of 4 pads a day, a 5 day cycle... that's 20 pads a month (You may use twice that) If you spend \$5 a pack of 10 pads, that's \$10 a month, \$120 a year, \$1,200 over 10 years or around \$3,600 over your menstruating life.

A Cup costs around \$20-\$60 (depending on the brand), and will last for around 10 years. Saving you around \$1,160.

Cloth Pads are around \$5-\$10 each (depending on brand), can be reused for around 5 years, (maybe longer). If you have 20 pads (at \$7 each) over 10 years, that's \$140 worth of pads, saving you \$1,060.

So while the initial cost of buying a reusable product is higher than buying disposables, in the long term, they can save you a lot of money. Wouldn't you rather spend your money on something nice, rather than disposable menstrual products?

Environmentally friendly.

Disposable pads and tampons are usually made from bleached paper pulp, individually wrapped in plastic and then most of these come packaged in a plastic bag or printed cardboard box. So not only are disposable pads filling up landfill themselves, they also produce a lot of non-biodegradable/recyclable waste, and toxins from the bleaching and manufacturing process.

Empowering.

Women often feel embarrassed that they menstruate and feel the need to hide it. It should be as normal as buying toothpaste! Women menstruate. Generally every month for 30 or so years. We should not be ashamed or embarrassed!

By thinking of menstruation less clinically and not treating it as some sort of shameful disease, we can shun those negative images of menstruation and not see it as a "curse", but as a normal part of our bodily process. Blood is not "dirty", if underpants get a bit of blood on them, they get washed and reused. Why are reusables considered to be so unsanitary? Only because of our perception of menstruation.

Where can I find more information?

For more information on reusable menstrual products, including reviews, links, patterns for making pads – go to:

www.ecomenses.com

Reusable Menstrual Products Groups

There are a few groups that discuss Reusable Menstrual products, where you can talk to other users about them.

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/111549912232926>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/117815494941410>

http://www.livejournal.com/community/diy_pads

http://www.livejournal.com/community/cloth_pads

http://www.livejournal.com/community/menstrual_cups

Places to buy Reusable Menstrual Products

You may be surprised at just how many are available!

You will find listings of pad manufacturers including pictures and a few details about them at:

www.clothpads.wikidot.com

Menstrual cups can be purchased through the manufacturer's websites, through reseller online stores and sometimes in pharmacies and health food stores.

Online "Mall" stores, where the one website hosts a variety of small businesses each selling their own wares, can also be a great source for Reusable Menstrual Products.

www.clothpadshop.com

www.etsy.com

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Reusable Menstrual Products



Comfortable, Eco-Friendly & Economical.

How many disposable pads and tampons are used and thrown away? A menstruating woman may go through an average of 4 pads or tampons a day, over 5 days. That's 20 per month, 240 a year... or over 30 years (an approximate menstrual lifetime) that's 7,200.

To put that into perspective, there are around 1,526,452 women of menstruating age in America. If each of those used 240 disposable products a year, that's a staggering 366,348,480 menstrual products thrown away *per year* in America alone.

Reusable menstrual products are no more "dirty" than re-using a hanky or your underpants. While tampons come wrapped in plastic and seem sterile, they aren't. Just like other things that might be inserted into the vagina that aren't sterilised first.

Reusable products can not only be better for the environment and your wallet, but they can also be better for your health. Without the TSS risks that tampons can pose, and without chemical adhesives and perfumes found in disposable pads, going reusable can make a difference in rashes, thrush and other such issues.

Maybe it's time to change your pad!

Washable Cloth Pads

These are not the “rags” of old! Cloth pads can be colourful, soft, made to fit any body shape perfectly and can be worn just as easily as a disposable pad. No belts, no pins.

Cloth Pads use things like snaps/press studs to secure the wings around the underpants. A combination of snug fitting underpants (throw out those “granny panties”!), the pad shape and fabric backing keeps the pads firmly in place.

They can be made from a variety of fabrics. Organics, soft bamboo velour, funky printed cottons. They come in small sizes for use as pantyliners, right up to longer pads that keep you covered even through a restless night sleep. As cloth pads are made from fabric, they are more “breathable” than the plastics found in disposables. This makes them feel less “sweaty” and can help prevent thrush and rashes.

Some cloth pads come with a waterproof fabric layer that makes them as leak-proof as a disposable pad. So a switch to cloth pads doesn't have to sacrifice protection. You may even find with the highly absorbent fabrics used, that cloth pads are even more effective than disposables!

You will need between 2-5 pads a day, depending on how often you like to change your pad and how heavy your flow is. It is recommended to have a total of 6-12 pads at least, as the more you have the less wear & tear on each pad, making them last longer. This might seem like a lot of expense to begin with, but they should last you 5 or more years, and you can build up your stash slowly as you can afford to.

Cloth pads can be used away from the home too. Most pads will fold into a small little convenient shape, like disposables do, and you can carry a small waterproofed bag (even a ziplock), to take any used pads home with you.

Washing cloth pads is easy. You can keep a container beside the toilet and pop your used pads in there. Then just rinse them out and/or chuck them straight into the washing machine! Bleach/disinfectants aren't necessary, detergent and thorough cleaning will clean your pads well enough.

Menstrual Cups

Menstrual cups are worn internally to collect the menstrual flow inside the vagina. Shaped like an upside-down bell, when inserted, it creates a seal against the vaginal walls and can be left in place for up to 12 hours. When full, it is removed and the contents tipped into the toilet, then rinsed and reinserted. They can be boiled or soaked in sterilising solution if desired, however a clean with soap and water is sufficient.

Menstrual cups may sound daunting at first, but they have many benefits over tampons. As they are non-absorbent, they don't dry out the vagina when the flow is light. They can even be worn the day your period is due to start, so you catch the flow straight away. They do not have a TSS risk, as tampons do, and can be kept in place for up to 12 hours.

While they look very big, they are folded for insertion. There are several ways to fold a Cup, the main one “The C Fold” is usually included in the instructions from the manufacturer. Cup information websites usually give diagrams and even videos on different folds.



A Menstrual cup can last around 10 years, and you will need only one, as they are rinsed and reinserted straight away. You may still like to wear a pantyliner with them just in case.

There are different brands on the market, each slightly different in size and shape. They usually come in 2 main sizes – a small cup, for women under 30 who have not given birth, and a larger one for women over 30 or who have given birth. This is to ensure the cup fills the vagina fully, to avoid leaks.

The capacity ranges from about 20mls to 30mls, depending on the brand or size of the cup. For most women this is enough capacity to wear the cup all day (to work/school etc.) without needing to empty it. By comparison, a tampon holds around 5mls.

Other Options

If pads and cups aren't your thing, there are a few other alternative products you can try.

Sea Sponge Tampons

These are natural sponges that can be used internally like a tampon, but that are reusable. They can be reused for several months, perhaps even a year. The sponges should be purchased from a reputable menstrual sponge seller, to ensure they are clean and not treated with chemicals.

To use them, you wet them with water, wring them out so they are just damp (and therefore squishy), and you insert them into the vagina. As they have no strings, to remove them, you need to “bear down” and reach up to remove them. Some women sew a string on to aid removal. The sponge is then rinsed clean and reinserted. Sponges are usually sold in a pack of 2, so that you can either use one at a time, and allow it to air dry between use. Or so you can use both sponges together for heavier flow.

Reusable Tampons

These are often crochet from cotton or bamboo yarns, or sewn from absorbent fabrics. Usually designed to roll up for insertion, and unroll for cleaning. Used dry, in the same way a non-applicator tampon is, they are simply washed out, allowed to dry and used again. You can buy these in some online stores, or make your own. Some stores sell the patterns. You would need a few of these, so that you can have some drying while you are using the others.

Interlabial Pad

These are sort of a cross between a tampon and a pad. If you don't want to use an internal product, but don't like pads, then this option could be for you.

They are a small pad worn in the labia (outer “lips”). As they are absorbing the flow closer to the vagina, they can be less “messy” than using pads, and can allow you to shower or sunbake without needing to wear a pad or internal product. They cannot be worn during swimming, and need to be removed before going to the toilet. They are simply washed and reused like a Cloth Pad would be.