

# Plastic Free Periods Fact Sheet



## **Environmental benefits**

Over the 30-40 years a person menstruates, they will use somewhere between 5,000 and 15,000 pads or tampons, with most ending up in landfill. It's not just the packaging; the individual items themselves are wrapped in plastic, meaning for conventional pads around 90% contain plastic. In landfill disposable menstrual products would likely take 300-500 years to decompose, if ever (Clean Up Australia, n.d.).

## **Economic benefits**

The amount of money you save by switching to reusable period products will depend on the frequency of your period, how heavy your flow is and the typical duration of your period. Next month take note of how many products you use and how much they cost, and you will be able to work out how much you typically spend in a year. It's estimated however that a person will spend around \$100 a year to manage their period (The Penny Hoarder, n.d.). By switching to reusable period products, you can avoid the shops each month and enjoy the money saving benefits!

## **Comfortable and convenient**

Cloth pads and absorbent period underwear flex with your body making them comfortable to wear. When menstrual cups and discs are inserted correctly, you won't feel them and because they are reusable, you'll never run out making them super convenient!

## **How many do you need?**

The number of cloth pads or pairs of period underwear you'll need will vary from person to person, but roughly you'll need around 6-12 with varying levels of absorbency, to match your flow from day to day. You may wish to have spares in case some are in the wash, or to carry in your bag for outings.

If you have decided that a menstrual cup or disc is for you - you only need to buy one – making them a very simple switch that can be used for years (sometimes up to 10 years if looked after well and depending on the manufacturers recommendations).

## **So many options!**

### Cloth pads

Cloth pads are a reusable alternative to disposable pads and liners, and come in different absorbency levels. They stay in place by wrapping around your underwear with wings that attach to each other with press studs. They often have a polyurethane laminate (PUL) layer to prevent leaks and are usually topped with cotton or bamboo velour with internal layers for absorbency.

### Absorbent period underwear

Absorbent period underwear is another alternative to disposable pads and are similar to regular underwear, but have layers of absorbency sewn in. They absorb your flow similar to pads and come in different absorbency levels, and you wear them in place of your regular underwear.

They are available in many different styles such as bikini briefs and trunks, and look just like regular underwear making them a great way to get into reusable period products, especially for teens.

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## Menstrual cups

A menstrual cup is a reusable tampon alternative worn inside the vagina that collects flow rather than absorbing it. Once inserted they form a seal. Cups come in all sizes and shapes to fit the wearer best and are most often made from medical grade silicone (but not always) (Put a Cup in It, n.d.).

A cup can be worn for up to 8-10 hours depending on the brand and your flow. It can take a few cycles to get the hang of it so at first you may wish to use cloth pad or period underwear as a backup. To help decide which cup to choose, you can take this quiz: <https://putacupinit.com/quiz/>

## Menstrual discs

Menstrual discs are another reusable alternative to tampons that are worn inside the vagina to collect flow rather than absorbing it. Unlike cups, rather than creating a seal they prop into place against your pubic bone, so the size and shape of the disc matters less. A disc (similar to a cup) can be worn for up to 8-10 hours depending on the brand and your flow. Removal can be a bit messy at first, but you'll soon get the hang of it!

## **Wash and care – cloth pads and period underwear**

To wash your cloth pads and period underwear, rinse with water until it runs clear – do this immediately after use if possible, or at the end of the day. Store the items in a dry pail/basket with air flow until wash day. Cloth pad and menstrual underwear washing tips from Clean Cloth Nappies- <https://cleanclothingnappies.com/cloth-pads/>

## **Wash and care – cups and discs**

Your cup or disc will come with instructions on how to insert them and remove them, and they will likely recommend sterilising before the start of your cycle. During your period rinse with water when emptying between uses. At the end of your cycle, clean with regular soap and water, and sterilise before storing (Menstrual Cups Australia Online, n.d.).

## **For more information:**

Put a Cup in It  
<https://putacupinit.com>

Clean Up Australia  
<https://www.cleanup.org.au/period-waste>

Cloth Nappy Workshops Melbourne  
<https://www.clothingnappyworkshopsmelbourne.com.au>



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