

## Period Products in Canada

Pads, period underwear, tampons and menstrual cups protect clothing and sheets from period blood. Many stores including corner stores, grocery stores and pharmacies sell pads and tampons. Department stores and some pharmacies sell menstrual cups and period underwear.

### Pads

Pads are small pieces of material that go inside the underwear. Some have “wings” or flaps for added protection against leaks or stains. Pads can be made of disposable, one-time use only materials or from fabric that can be washed and reused. There are different pads made for light, medium, or heavy blood flow.

### Period Underwear

Period underwear is special underwear with a layer of fabric that absorbs menstrual blood. They come in light, medium or heavy flow. Period underwear can be worn on its own or with a tampon or menstrual cup.

### Tampons

Tampons are made of cotton and go inside the vagina. They absorb most menstrual blood before it leaves the body. Some tampons come with an applicator to help with insertion. Tampons have a string attached to the end to help with their removal.

It can take practice to get comfortable with inserting a tampon. Angle the tampon towards your lower back while inserting. Some people like to insert it while sitting on a toilet. Others may squat a little or adjust their leg’s position to insert. Choose a position that feels comfortable and right for your body.

Change tampons every 4-6 hours or when it is saturated with blood. **Do not leave a tampon in overnight.** Leaving a tampon in too long can lead to Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). TSS is a treatable bacterial infection caused by leaving a tampon in the body for too long.

### Menstrual Cups

Menstrual cups are small devices made of rubber, silicone, or soft plastic. They are inserted into the vagina and collect most menstrual blood before it leaves the body. Menstrual cups can be emptied into the toilet as needed. Most cups are reusable. They will come with instructions on how to clean them before insertion. Like tampons, you may need to adjust how you sit or stand while inserting the cup.

Tampons and menstrual cups will not get stuck or lost inside the body. The vagina is made of muscle, which holds these devices in place. At the end of the vagina is a structure called the cervix. The cervix stops things from going too far into the body.

## Tampons, Menstrual Cups and the Hymen

Some people worry that using tampons or menstrual cups counts as having sex, but these are just tools for helping during someone's period. Using one of these tools does not mean a person has had sex.

This worry may be about a body part called the hymen. The hymen is a thin tissue around the opening of the vagina. Hymens, like all body parts, come in different shapes and sizes. Some bodies don't have a hymen, or it is very small. Other bodies have a larger hymen that may cover more of the vagina's opening.

We know that some people expect bodies with a vagina to bleed the first time they have sex from the hymen "breaking". However, the truth is more complicated. Some people with vaginas may bleed the first time they have sex, but many do not. Hymens don't really break. They just stretch a little. This can be from sex, but it also often happens through non-sexual activities like playing sports.

### What type of period protection is right for me?

Everyone has different needs and preferences. You may want to try a few different products to figure out what fits with your culture and your body. It is also common to use different products throughout one's period based on what you are doing.

Some people may choose to use tampons or menstrual cups for activities like exercising or swimming, or for everyday use. For heavy flows, someone may pair a tampon with a pad. No one must use a tampon or menstrual cup if they don't want to. Which type of product(s) to use up to you!

