

# SUSTAINABLE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

## Menstrual products

Menstruation is a normal bodily function and a sign of reproductive health. Above all else, girls and women need effective, safe and affordable menstrual products to manage their period.

## The problem

Single-use products such as disposable pads and tampons have dominated menstrual care over the past century. Given they take hundreds of years to break down, most of the single-use menstrual products ever produced are still sitting in landfill today. With increasing awareness around the environmental impacts of disposable items and improvements in technology, a growing range of menstrual products gives women more choice, along with cost and convenience benefits.

## What are the options?

There are many easy and effective sanitary product switches that can be more environmentally friendly, contain less synthetic materials and reduce waste to landfill.

### Tampons

single use



Most tampons are made of cotton or synthetic rayon, or a combination of both. In Australia, sanitary products are not required to list ingredients on their packaging. To choose tampons with a lower environmental impact, look for tampons that are 100% biodegradable and organic. Never flush tampons.

### Disposable pads

single use



Disposable pads are the most frequently purchased menstrual product in Australia. Disposable pads are typically made of cotton, plastics and other synthetic materials. Like all menstrual products, they must not be flushed down the toilet but disposed of in the rubbish where they take hundreds of years to break down in landfill.

## Did you know...

- A woman will have approximately 456 periods over 38 years - roughly 2280 days!
- The average woman uses 10,000-12,000 disposable menstrual products in their lifetime.
- Pads take around 500 years to biodegrade.
- Around 300 million tampons and 500 million pads are sold in Australia each year.

### Menstrual cups

reusable



A menstrual cup is a soft bell-shaped item made from medical-grade silicon which sits inside the vagina to collect the menstrual flow. They are removed to be emptied, rinsed out and replaced during a woman's period; and can be sterilised in boiling water after each period. One cup can last many years, and can be safely kept in place for up to 12 hours, even while swimming or sleeping.

### Reusable pads

reusable



Reusable pads, made of washable fabric, are an alternative to disposable varieties. Using fabrics such as cotton or bamboo, they can be very absorbent and may be reused for many years, simply being washed in the washing machine with the rest of the laundry.

### Period underwear

reusable



Period underwear is washable and reusable, can replace pads or tampons or be worn with tampons or menstrual cups for extra protection. Period underwear has slim, built-in absorbent layers stitched into the underwear that can hold up to 20ml or four tampons worth of fluid. Much like reusable pads, they can be washed in the washing machine with the rest of the laundry or after a pre-rinse if needed.

# SUSTAINABLE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS



## So what's better for the environment?

Reusable options tend to be kinder on the planet and more cost effective in the long run, while offering benefits such as reduced plastic, waste to landfill, and green house gas emissions.

But there is no right or wrong way nor need to stick to one product type when managing your period, there is a wealth of information available online that we encourage girls and women explore.

Ultimately, it comes down to personal preference and the great thing about reusable products is they provide girls and women a greater range of options to suit their lifestyle, they reduce waste and can be a cheaper alternative to disposable options.

## Cost comparison of menstrual products\*

\* Data has been collated by ACT NoWaste from a range of online sources and retailers.

Tampon	.50c	1	.50c
Disposable pad	.40c	1	.40c
Reusable pad	\$23	100	.23c
Menstrul cup	\$40	432	0.09c
Period underwear	\$24	180	.13c

## Sustainable period project

The Sustainable Period Project is designed to educate holistically at a grass roots level so that every person can be empowered to make informed choices regarding their menstrual health and to promote period positivity.

Find out more at [sustainableperiodproject.org](http://sustainableperiodproject.org)



## Learn more...



VIDEO

[Tampon vs Cup Rap Battle](#)



PODCAST

[Let's Slay Menstrual Taboos](#)



BOOK

[Welcome to Your Period](#)

*Yumi Stynes, Melissa Kang*



For information visit [act.gov.au/recyclopaedia](http://act.gov.au/recyclopaedia) or email [no\\_waste@act.gov.au](mailto:no_waste@act.gov.au)