



Menstrual Care

There are numerous options when it comes to period care products. It can be difficult to navigate all the methods and brands available on the market. It is especially important to consider safe options because the vulvar skin and vaginal mucosa is some of the most sensitive and permeable skin in the body, meaning that substances easily pass through the skin into the bloodstream. The biggest factors to consider when looking for healthy products are materials used, pesticide residue, bleaching by-products and fragrances.

Tampons, Pads and Liners

Many tampons, pads and liners contain endocrine disrupting chemicals such as phthalates, parabens and bisphenols.¹

Look for products that meet the following criteria:

- 100% organic cotton
- Unbleached, or chlorine-free bleach
- Unscented and fragrance free

If you purchase reusable pads make sure they are primarily organic cotton and not treated with antibacterial or antimicrobial chemicals.

¹ Gao CJ, Kannan K. Phthalates, bisphenols, parabens, and triclocarban in feminine hygiene products from the United States and their implications for human exposure. *Environ Int.* 2020 Mar;136:105465. doi: 10.1016/j.envint.2020.105465. Epub 2020 Jan 13. PMID: 31945693.

Menstrual Cups

Menstrual cups are reusable devices that can be inserted into the vagina to collect your menstrual flow. One benefit to using a menstrual cup is that it allows you to better understand your flow because you can see the consistency, amount and if there are any clots present. They must be removed, emptied and washed between each use, but are safe to wear for up to 12 hours.

Look for products that meet the following criteria:

- 100% medical-grade silicone
- Undyed

Menstrual cups must be washed between each use with a silicone-safe soap that won't disturb the microbial balance of the vagina. Most manufacturers of these cups also have soaps available that are safe to use. At the beginning of your period, you should clean the cup by boiling it in a pot of water for 5-10 minutes. This deeper clean only needs to be done once per cycle.

Period Panties

Period panties, or period underwear, are a newer product on the market. They look like regular underwear but have absorbent gussets and they can be used with or without other products. It's best to use them at home first, to make sure they work well for you. They have a wide variety of absorbencies and this will influence the amount of time before you'll need to change. They can be laundered and reused like regular underwear. It is important to thoroughly research any product you decide to buy as some brands have been found to contain PFAS² (these are carcinogens that accumulate in the body and cannot be readily detoxed) and nanoparticles that could possibly migrate into the body.

Look for products that meet the following criteria:

- Brands that are transparent about the materials they use
- Cotton as the primary material (preferably organic)
- Free from antimicrobial and antibacterial treatments

² <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/ask-ms-green/my-menstrual-underwear-has-toxic-chemicals-it>