

Why use Alternative Menstrual Products?

Lack of safety testing and recent health concerns over commercial tampons and pads are causing many people to rethink their choices regarding menstrual products. There are some not-so-apparent risks associated with using the products found at your local pharmacy.

Included in this pamphlet are some of the most common reasons people are switching to friendlier forms of flow control.

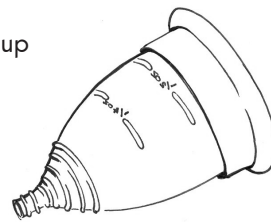
Some Problems with Mainstream Menstrual Products

Adhesive pads are often backed with plastic to prevent spills. Plastic, which is an irritant to many folks, isn't porous or breathable and so can lead to bacterial infection and yeast overgrowth. Also, plastic pads and tampon applicators are not biodegradable and so burden our landfills and oceans.

Many tampons contain a blend of cotton and the synthetic fibre rayon to increase absorbency. By providing an excellent growing medium for bacteria, high-absorbency tampons increase the risk of the blood infection known as Toxic Shock Syndrom (TSS). Rayon fibers have also been shown to cause minute tears in the vaginal lining, leaving some people prone to infection and

irritation. 100% cotton tampons have not been linked to TSS, but the bad news is that the cotton contained in most pads and tampons has been bleached with chlorine. The byproducts of this bleaching process include trace levels of the organochloride dioxin, which remains in both the end product and in the environment. Dioxin residue has been linked to endometriosis, reproductive cancers, birth defects, immune deficiencies and generally unhealthy stuff. As well, the cotton in pads and tampons is usually grown with pesticides. Trace amounts of these chemicals can remain in the finished products, and because menstrual products are in constant contact with delicate tissue for long periods of time, even minute amounts of dioxin and pesticides should be of great concern.

The Diva Cup



Some Solutions...

Organic Tampons and Pads

Made from 100% organically grown cotton, these tampons contain no synthetic fibers, no pesticides, and no herbicides. They are bleached with hydrogen peroxide rather than chlorine, which leaves none of the harmful dioxin associated with chlorine bleaching.

Sea Sponges

These are small natural sponges usually used for cosmetics. They are easy to use for many, and generally comfortable. Unfortunately, no studies have been done to determine if ocean pollutants remain in sea sponges, but boiling before use may help. Look for sponges that have been cleaned with hydrogen peroxide rather than chlorine bleach. Sea Sponges usually last 3-6 months and can be trimmed to fit more comfortably. Boil for a few minutes before each period to keep extra clean.

The Diva Cup

A reusable cup made of medical grade silicone. The Diva cup carries a very low risk of TSS as it doesn't absorb any menstrual or other fluids. The Diva is also very eco-friendly as using one Diva cup over its 10 year life span saves you from using and throwing away thousands of disposable tampons and pads. Not everyone finds it easy to use the cup, but those who are comfortable with tampons, might find they have great luck with the Diva Cup.

Cloth Pads

Reusable, breathable and often made by small, independent businesses, washable cotton pads are a great alternative to disposable paper and plastic pads. They are constructed of layers of absorbent flannel and terry. Washable pads can last for years with proper care!

Resources

Boston Womens Health Book Collective.
Our Bodies, Ourselves: A New Edition
for a New Era. Simon & Shuster, New York,
2005.

Muscio, Inga. Cunt: A Declaration of
Independence. 2nd Ed. San Francisco:
Seal Press, 2002.

Blood Sisters. Blood Sisters Menstrual Action.
www.bloodsisters.org.

Tampax. www.tampax.com.

One Woman. The Red Spot: Menstrual
Culture. www.onewoman.com/redspot.

Diva Cup. www.divacup.com.

Museum of Menstruation. www.mum.org

Venus Envy is an education oriented sex shop and
bookstore with stores in Ottawa and Halifax.
Our goal is to provide everyone with a respectful
(and fun!) place where they can find toys and tools
to explore gender and sexuality.

We believe that one of the best tools to enjoying
a healthy and satisfying sex life is knowledge. To that
end, we offer our pamphlets series as a way for people
to access information even if you're too shy to ask one
of us at the shop! You are welcome to download and
print any of these pamphlets to share with lovers,
friends, clients, or anyone else!

Our goal is to make sex positive and accurate
information available to everybody. Our pamphlets
offer an introduction to many facets of sex and sexual
health and are always evolving. We recognize that
language can be limiting and that people have a variety
of ways of describing their bits. We've chosen to use
medical terms for clarity, but understand that these
terms don't work for everyone. We welcome any
comments and suggestions that you may have.

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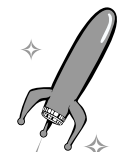
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