

## Period Products

Choosing what period products to use is a personal decision and it is important to find what works best for you. This information sheet sets out information for patients, families, and carers about period products to help informed decisions that are inclusive to all and mindful of environmental sustainability.

### Why is this important?

Period/ Menstrual products are a huge cause of plastic waste – the average person who has periods will use 11,000 disposable period products in their lifetime– that's a lot of plastic waste, most of which goes to landfill. Tampons come wrapped in plastic, often with plastic applicators, and pads often come in individual wraps and with a plastic leak-proof base. There are even plastics in the absorbent material of many products. This plastic does not biodegrade but breaks down into polluting microplastics over 100-500 years. Imagine, every 'disposable' period product you ever used is probably still out there somewhere. And next time you go for a dip in the sea, remember that disposable period products are the fifth most common type of waste found in the ocean. Disposable products also mean that we are locked into decades of purchasing.

There is good news. There are now loads of choices of re-usable products that are so much easier to use than disposable ones, and better for the environment and for you.

Research into period pants and menstrual cups (also known as Moon cups) has shown that these are safe and hygienic, with a reduced chance of infection, and leakage compared to traditional market plastic products.

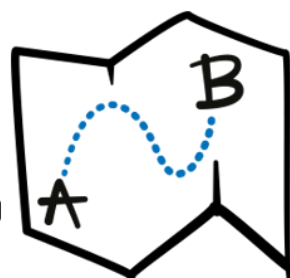
### Period Pants

Simply amazing.

Absorbent, leak-proof & breathable mid-layers keep you dry.

Wear for the day or night, rinse, pop in the wash and reuse (tip: rinse in the shower before popping in the wash). All you need do is choose your brand and style. These look the same as regular knickers, hipsters, bikini style or big pants! They come in different absorbencies to suit your flow and can keep you dry all day.

They are available in most big high street shops at reasonable prices. It is worth looking around and hunting out special offers to keep the costs down.





Period pants are good for all people who have periods and come in all sizes and styles, from boy shorts to thongs.

These pants are great for anyone with problems using their hands as they are as easy to use – just put on as you do normal pants.

## Caring for your period pants

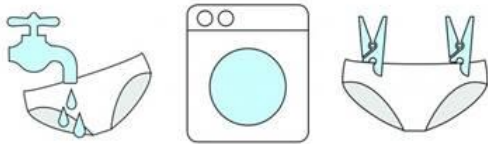
How to care for period underwear – as you would your everyday underwear.

**Step 1: Soak** After you remove your period pants, drop them in cold water to soak or rinse them.

**Step 2: Wash** If machine washing, wash on the delicate or gentle cycle. To make your underwear last, consider handwashing with a mild detergent.

**Step 3: Dry** Do not put in dryer. Instead, lay underwear flat or hang dry to help maintain the fabric's integrity.

**Step 4: Treat** Worried about stains or lingering smells? Period undies are designed to be stain-resistant and shouldn't retain a scent if cared for properly, but you can soak them in vinegar/water mixture prior to laundering, too



## Reusable Pads

A cheaper alternative option to period pants. Simply pop in your pants as you would a disposable pad, rinse, wash and use again. There are lots of great styles to choose from. If you need to change one when you are out, you can get small bags to keep them in, very hygienically.

## Menstrual cups (also known as moon cups)

If you don't fancy the extra washing, try a menstrual cup. These cost from as little as £6:99, should last 5-10 years and only need to be emptied approx. every 12 hours.



With practice over a few periods, it can be as easy as (or easier) than using a tampon. They can be discretely sterilised in the microwave before each period. When changing, simply remove, rinse out and reinsert. A tip: they get softer and easier to insert and remove after using for a few months. Once you are used to them, they can be a lot more comfortable than tampons.



## Menstrual Sponge

This may be something you hear about but come with a word of caution as they may be associated with a higher risk of infection and we wouldn't recommend them for this reason. They are sponges that are inserted and absorb blood. They usually need changing more often than a menstrual cup and can be a bit messier to change. Once removed they can be rinsed and re inserted.

## Eco-friendly disposable products

If you are not quite ready to go down the re-usable route, reduce your environmental impact with eco-friendly products that are biodegradable and plastic free. Available as tampons and pads. And why not try a reusable tampon applicator or just use a finger, rather than a single use plastic applicator.

## Having a period whilst being in hospital

Please don't worry if your period catches you unprepared whilst you are an inpatient, this can often happen, especially as having an operation can trigger a period! Just tell your Nurse or Occupational Therapist and we will help. Another place to find useful information is here: <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/periods/>

## Any concerns?

We know we do not always get things right. Please do raise any queries or issues with the ward/ clinic staff in the first instance. We want to help and often we are able to resolve things quickly.

Another way of raising a concern or query is to contact our **Pals Office** – they are based in the main reception area and open from Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm. You can also call them on 020 7829 7862 or email [pals@gosh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gosh.nhs.uk).

The Pals team can offer independent advice and support, working with you to sort out a problem along with members of staff.

If you require this leaflet in another format or language, please contact the Pals team.

