The Best Period Products for Yourself, and the Environment

Conventional disposable pads and tampons have not been around for that long, and while they were once something to marvel over, women are already in search of more eco, and budget-friendly alternatives. Disposable pads and tampons are often made from synthetic materials and chemicals designed to make the products extra absorbent, and order- neutralizing. A good rule of thumb is to not use products on the most sensitive areas of your body that you wouldn't want to ingest. Additionally, when disposed of, these products take hundreds of years to break down, and often times end up in the ocean, which can be detrimental to marine life.

Many people are only taught about two options: pads, and tampons. No one really goes over the problems associated with either product, aside from Toxic Shock Syndrome. Making the switch from conventional products to eco-friendly, health-friendly alternatives can be a difficult transition but your body, the environment, and your wallet will thank you for it in the long run. This article goes over some of the most popular alternatives to conventional pads and tampons, and which products we think are the best overall for the environment and your health.

Recommended: *How to Eliminate IBS, IBD, Leaky Gut*

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100% Organic Cotton Tampons

100% cotton tampons are probably our least favorite option. Just because the tampons are organic doesn't mean they're good for you. One thing that is important to remember, putting

anything inside your vaginal canal that’s not meant to be there can cause health problems, especially when your body is trying to expel waste. Tampons work by absorbing the blood, which can allow for the body to reabsorb some of the toxins from the body’s expelled waste. A menstrual cup or disc that just sits inside your body and collects blood does not have these issues. As is the case with regular tampons, Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) is a concern. It’s no wonder tampons have also been shown to worsen cramps.

Organic cotton tampons are better for you than regular tampons but we encourage you to explore other options. In addition to the health risks associated with tampons, they are disposable, single-use items, so they’re wasteful even when they’re made right.

Like organic cotton pads, cotton tampons are more expensive than regular ones. You can pretty easily find Organic Cotton tampons at most grocery stores, drug stores, and health-food stores. Despite the convenience of picking them up while grocery shopping, buying online can help ensure that your money goes to independent, small businesses.

100% Organic Cotton Disposable Pads

Chlorine-free, organic pads have the same environmental upsides as organic tampons but are also better for your health. Buying organic pads, (and tampons) may be the simplest way to make a difference in your carbon footprint and health without much of a noticeable change. Of course, with anything disposable, the downside is that you will have to continue to buy these as long as you’re using them, and 100% cotton pads are more expensive than the conventional, petroleum and chemical-based products.

Of course, you are still generating waste, but without the added plastics and chemicals, these pads will break down much faster and cleaner than their conventional counterpart. If you have the means, we encourage you to explore more eco-friendly alternatives, as there are many options out there (keep reading), but 100% cotton organic pads can be a step in the right direction. You can usually find organic cotton pads at drug stores or grocery stores, or health food stores.

Menstrual Cups

Menstrual cups aren’t the best for your health, but they are much better for the environment than disposable products and they’re a healthier option compared to tampons, organic, or not. Menstrual cups are typically made from medical grade silicone, and sit inside the vagina. You can leave them in for 12 hours at a time, making them convenient for long periods of time, and overnight (emptying more frequently is better for health). Along with long wear time, you can keep your menstrual cup and reuse it for more than 10 years, making them much more cost-effective than disposable period products. Just take it out, empty it, and clean thoroughly before the next use. The downside, this can be a little difficult in public spaces.

With menstrual cups, as is the case with regular tampons, inserting something inside your body that isn’t meant to be there, and/or restricting flow in any way, isn’t great for your body’s ability to expel toxins. Additionally, even the small menstrual cups can be uncomfortable to use, especially for those who have never had a child, or those who have never had vaginal intercourse.

Many women feel that the menstrual cup is convenient and it’s much better for you than a regular tampon made with synthetic materials that can cause irritation. The Saalt Cup is very highly rated and one of the best options as it is organic, and

the company that produces them is a certified B-corp.



The Saalt Cup is a reusable soft silicone cup worn internally like a tampon, but collects—rather than absorbs—your period.

Recommended: *How to Eliminate IBS, IBD, Leaky Gut*

Menstrual Discs

Menstrual discs are similar to menstrual cups in practice, but there are a few differences. For starters, as the name suggests, menstrual discs are shaped like a disc as opposed to a cup. Additionally, they sit higher in the body, closer to the cervix than tampons or menstrual cups, this can take a bit of getting used to if you're not familiar with that part of your body. Menstrual discs are not as bad as tampons but not as good as menstrual cups because of how far up they sit in the body. Lastly, most menstrual discs are typically

disposable. Menstrual discs are better than tampons for the environment because they are good for up to 12 hours of use depending on your flow (much longer than tampons).

One of the most popular pros of menstrual discs is that they are one the best ways to have mess-free period sex, so if that's something you're looking for, menstrual discs might be a good option. While some people have said the discs can move a little bit during sex, resulting in leakage, most people don't have issues. One of the most popular brands of Menstrual discs, the Flex Disc, is made from medical-grade polymer and is free of BPA's and latex, while also being hypoallergenic.

If you want to go the reusable route checkout The Ziggy Cup which is more of a disk than a cup; it's bowl-shaped. It is one the most highly rated reusable menstrual discs on the market, made out of medical-grade silicone. They also offer various cups and other feminine products.



Reuseable Pads

Reuseable pads are one of the best options for your health and the environment. Typically they're made from 100% cotton and you simply soak them in cold water then wash them in the washing machine when you're done. While more expensive initially, they will save you money in the long run, as is the case with all reusable products. Some women have said that they can shift around more than regular pads, but with no adhesive strip there's no concern about getting pubic hair stuck to the pad, which is definitely a plus. Having to change a reusable pad anywhere other than home can be a bit of a hassle, but in my opinion, this problem is well worth the inconvenience for the environment's sake, just bring a bag with you to stick your used pad in. Many women say that reusable pads are more comfortable than regular ones. Without the synthetic materials and chemicals in regular pads, there's less irritation and less chaffing. We like these New Moon Pads but you can also make your own.



New Moon Pads

Period Underwear

Period underwear is pretty much what it sounds like: underwear that absorbs your flow without any other products. Along with reusable pads, they are one of the best options for the environment (although not as good as 100% cotton reusable pads, as many types of period underwear have synthetic materials). Period underwear does not feel like an adult diaper; they look and feel like regular underwear. In fact, you'll probably feel even less like you're in a diaper than when you wear a regular pad. They're typically made with an extra layer of fabric designed to be extra absorbent. The problem is these might not work all day for you if you have a heavy flow.

They make a couple of different kinds, some designed for overnight, and some with inserts that go inside the underwear similar to reusable pads. Typically one pair of period underwear is designed to be as absorbent as 2 tampons. Since these are reusable they are one of the more environmentally friendly options, and if you're not combining them with a tampon, then these have no health drawbacks. There are lots of different kinds out there, so check out this article by Good House Keeping to get an idea of which brand might be best for you.

Sea Sponges

This one surprised me. I had never heard of Sea Sponges being used for menstrual products until I did the research for this article. Turns out, they're very popular and have been used for years. Supposedly, Cleopatra was a fan.

Sea sponges are used like tampons; just insert them inside the vaginal canal until you're unable to feel it, and then pull it out when you're done, generally after 6-8 hours, or when it

gets full. When it’s full rinse it with warm water and then ring it out to dry. They’re super absorbent, soft and comfortable, easy to use, and reusable. You can also trim them down to whatever size works for you. Sea sponges are fragile, so handle with care.

You can find sea sponges with strings sewn in for convenience, and they last between 3-6 months. Sea sponges are compostable so you can throw them in your compost bucket at the end of their life, and when done correctly Sea Sponges regenerate after being picked, making them one of the best options for the environment. Again, at OLM, we recommend using products that don’t go inside your body over products that do go in your body, for health reasons, but we do love that these are all-natural and have been time-tested. It’s recommended that you clean your Sea Sponge in warm water (not boiling, as it can damage the sponge).

Since the Sea Sponge is a natural product it can contain sand and other ocean particles when you get it. There has not been a lot of scientific research conducted about the health risks of using sea sponges, but they’ve been used by women for centuries. If you’re looking for a product that isn’t a pad, that goes inside your body, this sounds like a good alternative for your health and for the health of the environment. Jade and Pearl is a small business in Florida that sells ethically sourced sea sponges and other eco-friendly menstrual products.



So what option is best?

Choosing the best product for you will depend on your budget and your needs. For convenience, overall health, and the environment, I’m partial to reusable pads. If you’re looking for something insertable, I hope you’ll try the sea sponge for sake of the environment and your health, or any of the reusable products listed if you’re more concerned about the environment than your health. Personally, I don’t recommend anything disposable long term, but merely as a transitional

tool from your conventional products to something more sustainable.

If you have a heavy flow (along with overwhelming cramping and mood swings) we recommend fixing your hormonal system by checking out our article, *Holistic Guide to Healing the Endocrine System and Balancing Our Hormones*.

Sources:

- *Are Your Tampons and Pads Toxic?*-Small Footprint Family
- *5 Eco-Friendly Period Products You Will Actually Want To Use*-Green Matters
- *Teamoy Reusable Cloth Menstrual Pads Review: The Best Cloth Pads?*-The Reuseable Menstrual Cup
- *Organic Cotton Reusable Natural Sanitary Pad (Wing/Brown) Set of 3*-Hesta Organic
- *9 Best Reusable Pads: Cotton, Bamboo, and Organic Reusable Cloth Pads*-EcoKarma
- *2020's Top 5 Sea Sponge Menstrual (Soft) Tampons Reviews*-Menstrual cup Reviews
- *5 Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Period Products to Try NowMenstrual Disc: What to Know Before You Try*-Retail Me not