

Client: Friday Undies

What's the deal with the bleed? and the importance of having options for that time of the month.

It's a tale as old as time so let's talk about it.

Periods.

Well, sanitary products to be exact.

Almost all women go through their periods in their own way but the one thing that binds us all is the sanitary products we use that gets us through the days and nights. We've all been there, staring at shelves, wondering and hoping to find something that would make that time of the month a little more comfortable. And let's face it, not all stores carry different types of sanitary products but let's count our lucky stars to be living in the era of online shopping.

The first thing you might want to consider is your flow. Is your flow light or heavy? Does it last for less than 6 days or more? Depending on how you answer these questions, it will play a huge part on the type of product that is suitable for you. Next, you will want to consider if you are opting for external or internal sanitary products. Internals would be cups and tampons and externals would be pads, panty liners and period panties.

While internal products may be more versatile, it is not always the best choice for young girls who have just started their menses and may not feel too comfortable starting with an invasive product. However, it will differ for every individual and when it comes to sanitary products, the key point is always comfort first. Which means, you will have to go through quite a bit of trial and error but trust us when we say it's your best bet because *no one will know more about your body than you do.*

Moving on, let's talk money. Sanitary products can be pricey depending on the kind of materials used or even the brand itself. So this will boil down to a simple question: Reusable or Disposable Products. While disposable products may cost less upfront, it does pile quite a bit if you were to crunch those numbers. On the other hand, we have reusable products like cups and period panties which is a rather pricey one-time payment but it will save you money in the long run. You might think this is a no brainer and opt for the reusable products but do keep in mind that these products, while cost effective, may not suit your lifestyle. They require quite a bit of maintenance such as regular washing and sanitizing. Plus, if you're not a fan of getting blood on your hands (literally) these products may not be for you. But, if you're cool with a little mess and spending some time with cleaning, go for it! You'd be doing mother nature a favour as well.

The next point is rather important but not really talked about much and that is material. This is especially important for those that are a bit more sensitive down there. Majority of disposable products are made from a combination of materials such as bleached rayon, plastic, cotton and absorbent gels. While there are a number of women who don't have an issue wearing them there are still a vast number

of women who suffer from irritation and allergy reactions. Again, this is a matter of trial and error as some women have reported feeling irritation from some brands but are totally fine with others.

Pads / Napkins

Pads have been a time tested product that has served women for centuries. They have also been modified over time to suit a modern woman's needs but it isn't always the best for everyone. Depending on your lifestyle, you may opt for two types of sanitary pads; Disposable or Reusable.

Disposable Pads

With disposable pads, it's pretty straight forward, you stick it on the inside of your panties and you're good to go. All you have to keep in mind here is the type you are looking for depending on how heavy your flow is and what your budget is like. This type is highly recommended for young girls who have just started their period and need something to get them accustomed to this new routine.

On the other hand, with reusable pads, you will have to keep in mind that it can be a little uncomfortable and they do shift as you move around and the chances for leakage is higher compared to other sanitary products.

Reusable Pads

Reusable pads are an awesome way to save money and the environment. Plus, they come in super fun designs! The pads come in different kinds of materials such as cotton, polyester, wool, fleece, suedecloth, jersey cloth etc. This might get a tad bit overwhelming at first but it's basically a difference between organic and synthetic cloths. So, your organic would be wool, cotton, fleece etc. and your synthetic would be polyester, suedecloth, jersey cloth etc. There are more fabrics than these depending on the brand that you buy from but not to worry as most brands will give detailed explanations on the types of fabrics that they use.

The downside to a reusable pad, however, is the cost and the maintenance. You will have to purchase several pads of different sizes and materials to manage your period flows. For example, if you have heavier flows, you may have to consider a larger pad (longer as well) and one that is made from synthetic materials as they are able to retain more blood compared to organic materials. This would mean that you'd have to fork up a larger sum upfront than you would with a disposable pad. That being said, if the pad is maintained well, you won't have to purchase pads for the next 4 years!

Another downside here is the maintenance. Since it is reusable, you would have to wash your pad thoroughly and dry them well. Which could pose a bit of a problem if you are always on the move and do not have the chance to find a place to change your soiled pad and wash them, let alone dry them. However, many women do opt for disposable pads during working hours and often put on reusable pads when they are lounging at home. Another tip is to purchase a wet bag (yes, the ones that we store soiled diapers in) they work like a charm! Just ensure to get one that's big enough for the pads you are going to use for the day.

Period Panties

How amazing is it that we now have period panties! No fuss, no muss, just plain ol' comfy period panties.

These panties are not like your usual panties. They are actually made from several layers to hold all the blood. Every brand will have their own materials that they use to make the panties. These can range from wool, cotton, nylon and even bamboo fibre. Period panties are super useful for all females of any age group. They are convenient, comfortable, economical and some brands even have swimwear options. However, just like reusable pads, to ensure that it lasts for years, you will have to practice proper maintenance.

For women who have just delivered a baby or are pregnant, these are especially ideal since you don't have to bend too much unlike with other products. Plus, you won't feel anything on or inside your lady bits which can be freeing seeing as you are already preoccupied with making a human being.

There really isn't that much of a downside to period panties. Just like reusable pads, they can get a little messy when cleaning and you won't be able to do so in public restrooms which means you will have to get a couple of panties and a wet bag to store the soiled ones. Nonetheless, most brands do offer different types based on your flow so if you aren't able to change your panties every 6 hours or so, get the ones with maximum absorbency.

Menstrual Cups

Menstrual cups are another option for internal sanitary products and unlike tampons, they are reusable. This means your wallet won't be taking a hit every month and you do not need to buy a lot of cups at one go. In fact, if you are able to manage it, buying one cup will suffice. The best part? Some can last for up to 10 years! Plus, the maintenance of a menstrual cup is not as tedious as a reusable pad since it's made from high grade silicone. It can be washed easily with warm water and gentle soap.

However, until you get the hang of it, expect spills to happen once in a while. Inserting a cup is not as complicated as it sounds and when you are on your period, your vagina is already lubricated so sliding the cup back in should not be too difficult. However, if you do feel dry down there, consider coating the outside of the cup with water based lubricant.

For women who are going through perimenopause, you will notice that your periods are a little haywire. Sometimes they don't come for months and then suddenly it's Niagara Falls the next day! Cups are a perfect for this and you won't have to carry around a bunch of pads waiting for your period to happen.

There are two downsides to the cup; mess and pricey trial and error.

Using a cup that collects blood, it will get a little messy and difficult to handle when you're in public toilets. You would need to squat and push your pelvic muscles a bit to grab hold of the end of the cup to

pull it out without spilling it. To combat this, we do suggest that you practice at home and wear other alternatives when you're in public.

Another downside here is that menstrual cups are not cheap and they come in many different sizes and lengths. To ensure that the cup fits you well, you would need to try a few until you find the right one. On the other hand, most brands do have a measurement chart that can more or less estimate the size you should get.

Tampons

Tampons were considered a revolutionary sanitary product when it first hit the market. It was also controversial because of the myth that it could tear a woman's hymen and therefore, making her not a "virgin" anymore. That has proven to be completely untrue. Which is why they are a great option for women who don't like the thought of wearing a pad. Plus, they make an excellent choice when it comes to doing certain sports like swimming and even running. However, many women especially in Asian countries find it hard to get hold of tampons because of the beliefs held in place so you may opt to search online for your ideal brand.

A tampon is trickier to use but if inserted correctly, you should not feel discomfort or pain while using it. However, it may be a touch uncomfortable for some women who may have medical conditions such as endometriosis or vaginismus, although this condition is quite rare. For older women who are going through menopause or are in the starting stages of it, you may experience vaginal dryness and inserting a tampon may hurt even though you've been using it for years. Talk to your doctor should you feel pain when using a tampon.

A downside here is that tampons, unlike other products, tampons can't be worn for too long regardless of your flow. Make sure to change it every 4 hours or 6 hours' maximum to lower the risk of getting Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) and while this is extremely rare, it does happen and the cause is often due to the tampon being left inside for too long so avoid using it overnight.

Whew! That was an exhaustive list wasn't it? Well, periods can be exhausting. It isn't like the TV ads that show fresh faced women frolicking in the sun in white pants. We all know that it consists of cramps, bloating, mood swings and the constant fatigue. Despite all that, what do we do? That's right, we women up, put on our choice of blood catchers and we keep on going.

Sadly, women in poorer backgrounds have it even harder as menstrual products are expensive when you can barely afford to put food on the table. Which is why having options is extremely important. Reusable products help women save cost and it gives them a sense of relief knowing that they don't need to fork out cash every month to take care of something that is out of their control.

For young girls who are going through their first period or perhaps even waiting to start their periods, knowing that they have choices will make the experience less daunting.