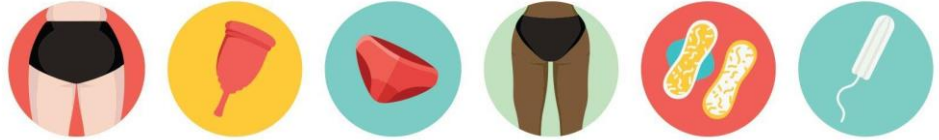


RETHINK PERIODS



Menstrual Products - FAQs

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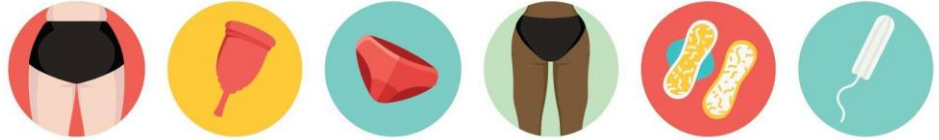
[Period Education in Schools](#)

Conclusions from our pilot, which we ran in 2018 with the support of Anglian Water, identified that:

- a) Periods are not covered in enough depth in schools. There are constraints on time, limited resources and lack of confidence in delivery.
- b) Boys are often left out of the discussion.
- c) Most of the discussion tends to focus on a narrow range of products and rarely touches on disposal.
- d) Education is monopolised by leading brands. We think that it's vital for students to receive information on ALL the products available to them, not just a limited range. After all, everyone's physical and economic needs are different.

The education around products that is received at a young age is likely to shape a person's whole period experience, so in order to make informed choices they need to be aware of the variety of materials available, costs and correct disposal/cleaning methods.

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Educational Context

The government have committed to introducing compulsory Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and the health aspect of PSHE education in schools by 2020. Therefore, we designed our unbiased schools' programme to give PSHE teachers and ambassadors the resources that they need to deliver comprehensive period education.

- Pupils felt less awkward or stupid and more comfortable and confident talking about periods after the programme.
- Key learnings were about the different types of products available, the environmental impacts of those products and knowledge around sewage systems and flooding.
- Students were four times more likely to try [plastic-free disposables](#) after the lessons.
- Students were three times more likely to try [menstrual cups](#) after the lessons.
- Students were 25% less likely to use disposable tampons and 50% less likely to use disposable pads after the lessons.
- 72% of teachers had previously thought that flushing tampons down the toilet was okay (find out [here](#) why we shouldn't be flushing ANY products!).

Menstrual Cups

What is a menstrual cup?

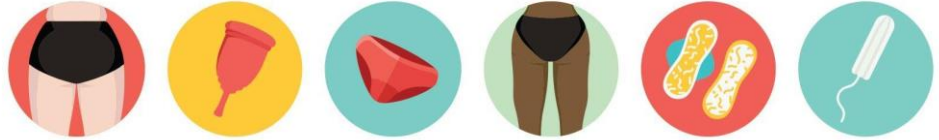
Menstrual cups are soft, flexible cups made of medical grade silicone, TPE or latex rubber. Menstrual cups are worn internally, by folding and inserting the cup in a similar way to a tampon. Instead of absorbing your blood, like a tampon or pad, the cup catches it and you can empty it down the toilet. Menstrual cups hold more blood than your average tampon so you shouldn't need to empty it as regularly as you would change a tampon. We recommend taking this quiz to find out which cup might suit your flow best: www.putacupinit.com/quiz/

A menstrual cup should last you 5-10 years and is perfect for travelling (who wants to carry boxes of tampons and pads around whilst on the move?).

Menstrual cups cost £9 - £24.90 and will last you 5-10 years.

Are all menstrual cups the same? How do I pick the right one for me?

RETHINK PERIODS



All cup brands are different so you should do your research and work out the best option for you. Each brand usually has a few options that differ in size and sturdiness, depending on your lifestyle, your flow and body.

You want to make sure that your cup is made of medical grade silicone, medical grade latex or medical grade TPE, as well as BPA-free. Cups that do not mention it in their packaging probably include some nasties, including plastic!

What are menstrual cups made of?

Most menstrual cups are made from medical grade silicone, latex or TPE. Always opt for a medical grade cup - we would recommend avoiding the cheap, unverified brands on ebay and Amazon.

Do menstrual cups come in different sizes?

Most cups come in 2 sizes: a smaller one suitable for those aged under 30 who have never given vaginal birth, or a larger one suitable for those over 30, or those who have given vaginal birth. Some brands also have various sizes that suit differences in pelvic floor strength, cervix height and menstrual flow.

Some brands have a 'stem' which can be trimmed so that it sits comfortably between your labia.

Be sure to check individual brands for guidance on what size to choose!

Like with tampons, it can take a while to get used to inserting the cups. After this, most people say they can't feel them.

What is the best way to insert a reusable cup?

There are various ways to insert a cup - try them out and see what works for you.

You may not be able to get the menstrual cup to fit right the first time, but with a bit of practice you will be able to insert the cup like an expert. Make sure you read the instructions and try to relax as much as possible!

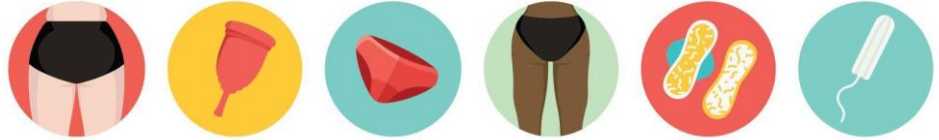
Here's a Lunette video demonstrating 3 different folding styles:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCU7eYkAFrg>

1. C-fold/heart fold
2. Punch down fold/shell fold
3. 7-fold or triangle fold

Spinning the cup a quarter turn once it's inserted may help to make sure that the seal is good.

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You may find it easier to put your legs wide apart whilst sitting on the loo (if you're wearing tights or trousers, pull them right down to your ankles!)

Does it hurt to insert or wear a menstrual cup?

This is totally dependent on the individual and whether you have secondary dysmenorrhea or any other disability, impairment or disease that affects your cervix and/or vagina. If you're comfortable using a tampon, it's likely that a cup will work for you.

For many people, menstrual cups have to be changed much less regularly than tampons, so there is less faffing around in your sensitive area.

Some people take a few cycles to get used to the menstrual cup and work out how it works best for them. When a cup is properly inserted (and the stem is appropriately trimmed!) you shouldn't feel the cup inside you at all.

Sometimes the cup doesn't unfold which might feel uncomfortable - rotating it a couple of times inside you should open it up.

If you have a low cervix or a cervix that moves particularly low during menstruation, the cup may exert pressure on the cervix and cause discomfort and even pain. Check out [this article](#) for more information on your cervix and menstrual cups.

You don't need to wait for your period to start before you can try out your menstrual cup - it's perfectly OK to do a "dry-run" since menstrual cups won't dry you out in the same way that tampons do.

How do I remove a menstrual cup and can it get lost?

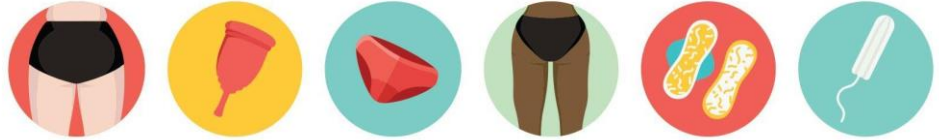
Don't worry! You're not getting anything stuck in there. The cup sits inside the vagina and can't pass through the cervix.

Removing your menstrual cup can be tricky at first, but it will come naturally after a few tries.

Relax. Use your pelvic floor muscles to push down until you can get a firm grip on the stem of the cup.

Break the seal by pinching the bottom part of the cup until you feel or hear the edges of the cup release. Then, gently rock the cup from side to side while pulling down. Make sure that you do not pull the cup out by the tab alone - you need a firm grip to avoid spillages!

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You can also try sliding your finger up the side of the cup (your finger between the cup and vaginal wall) and bend your finger when you reach the rim.

It is very unusual for cups to get stuck, but Mooncup offer a customer service helpline for people having difficulties (Advice Centre 0044 (0)1273 673845).

Take care not to cut the extended tube too short as this can make it tricky to get the cup out.

How often should I empty my menstrual cup?

When you first start using the cup empty it every few hours and you'll soon get an idea of how heavy your flow is and how often you'll need to empty it. If your flow is very heavy you may need to empty it every couple of hours. If your flow is lighter, you may find you can go as long as 6-8 hours.

The capacity of a menstrual cup is usually 25 ml or 30 ml whereas the absorbing capacity of a tampon is 6-18 g.

Where can I empty it and how full will it get?

The blood is simply poured into the toilet. The cup can contain more liquid than three super tampons.

According to the [NHS](#), you'll lose 5 to 12 teaspoons of blood during an average period, so you might be surprised by how little you bleed.

Does the cup need cleaning after being emptied?

Different brands give different advice, but the key thing is to ensure your hands have been washed before removal to avoid bacteria or germs entering the vagina. The cup can be rinsed with water or cleaned with toilet paper during a cycle, then washed more thoroughly between cycles.

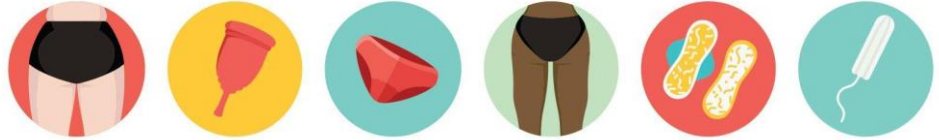
How can the cup be sterilised after use?

In between cycles, the cup should be sterilised with boiling water. Again, brands vary in their recommendations for the length of time. Boiling can be done in a pan or in the microwave. Ruby Cup sell [a receptacle](#) to microwave the cup in. Some brands recommend using Milton Fluid (steriliser used for babies' feeding equipment) or unperfumed soap, although care should be taken not to upset the pH balance in the vagina.

Read the instructions that come with your cup - some will suggest boiling in a saucepan at the start and end of your cycle for between 5-10 minutes whereas others advise using sterilising tablets or cup cleanser.

Using normal soap is not advised because of the pH, the oils and the lack of a thorough clean in the nooks and crannies of the cup.

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How do I clean my cup in a public toilet?

Make sure your hands are clean and bring a reusable water bottle into the toilet with you so you can rinse your cup off if there's no sink. It's not needed or advised to use normal soap because of the pH, the oils and the lack of a thorough clean in the nooks and crannies of the cup.

If you're out for a shorter period of time or don't have access to a tap/ water bottle, you can wipe your cup clean with toilet paper or use a special [disinfectant wipe like these](#). Make sure you put the wipe in the bin and not down the toilet! Wipes contain a lot of plastic and can cause blockages and flooding in our sewers.

Properly disinfect your cup before and after your period, by putting in boiling water or using sterilising tablets - refer to the brand guidelines.

Does the cup need cleaning after being emptied?

Different brands give different advice, but the key thing is to ensure your hands have been washed before removal to avoid bacteria or germs entering the vagina. The cup can be rinsed with water or cleaned with toilet paper during a cycle, then washed more thoroughly between cycles.

Is the menstrual cup messy?!

Cups can be messy when you start learning to use them, but once you've mastered the technique and worked out what's best for you, you can avoid any leaks or spills.

If your flow is heavy, you may find that blood pools in the bottom of the loo when you empty your cup, even after you've flushed. Use a toilet brush and flush again, and the red water should go!

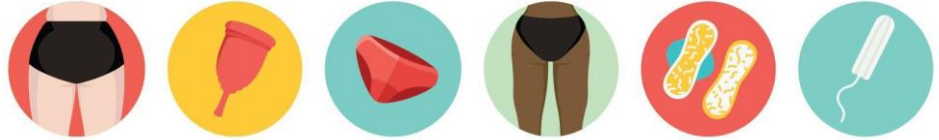
Can a menstrual cup leak?

If your flow is very heavy or your cervix hangs very low when you're menstruating you may find that the cup leaks a little. Leaks are more frequent for people whose cervix' move lower during menstruation or if the cup has been inserted too high in the vagina, next to the cervix, or above it.

Remember to make sure the suction air holes are clear before reinserting your cup each time. Rotating the cup a couple of times will make sure that the cup has unfolded inside you.

To catch any small leaks you might want to wear a reusable pad or period pants in conjunction with the cup, especially when you're trying it for the first few months and you're still learning about your flow.

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Can I have sex whilst using the menstrual cup?

No! The only cup that you can wear whilst having sex is the Nixit cup which has been designed especially.

Can I play sports / bathe / swim with my menstrual cup?

Yes absolutely!

A menstrual cup is worn internally (and you don't have that rogue tampon string to worry about!) and holds more volume than tampon. Some super sporty people find that firmer cups stay in place better in their stronger pelvic muscles. Firmer cups include: **Hello Cup**, **MeLuna Sport**, **Yuuki**, or **Lena**.

Do menstrual cups smell?

Period blood is not smelly - it's only when the blood oxidises and comes into contact with perfumed pads that it starts smelling strange.

A slightly metallic smell is totally normal, but if your period blood smells fishy or rotten then head to the GP.

If you're worried about body odor, empty your cup more often. If you're worried about cup odor, wash the cup regularly.

Can I use a menstrual cup if my uterus has an unusual tilt or I have a low cervix?

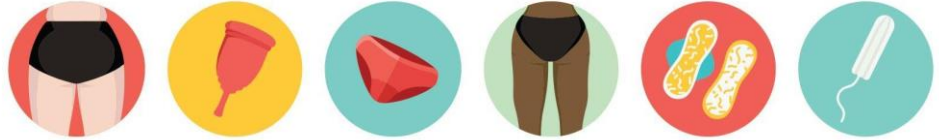
The cervix is usually high in the vagina and the menstrual cup is placed low so the cervix remains above the cup. For many people, the cervix descends after giving birth. The height of the cervix may also change slightly throughout the menstrual cycle and may move during sex.

For some people, the cervix is always situated low in the vagina. If you have a low cervix it may enter the interior of the cup which makes it more prone to leak. In some users, the cervix fits best inside the menstrual cup but for others the cup may exert pressure on the cervix that can cause discomfort and even pain. [The Hello Cup](#) have a menstrual cup specifically for people with low cervix'.

The best way to evaluate the position of your cervix is by observing leakage – if you have experienced leakage even when the cup is fully open in the vagina, make sure that the cup is significantly lower than the cervix.

If you haven't experienced leakage and you have not located the cervix, there's no need to hunt for it! You're a woman whose cervix is so deep in the

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vagina that it doesn't affect the use of the menstrual cup in any way. Read more about cervix' and menstrual cups [here](#).

If you have a tilted uterus the cup may also be tilted, causing it to leak a little. Here is a video from Lunette about how to make sure your cup is its place!

Can I use a menstrual cup if I am using the IUD?

Yes, you can. If you do use an IUD, consult with your doctor about cutting the strings as short as possible and monitor their length regularly during periods. If the strings seem longer than normal, it might be a sign that your IUD has moved and you should be cautious about using a cup.

Are there any negatives to having silicon inside the body with regards to hormone disruption?

Silicon is fairly inert and not associated with hormone disruption, unlike the additives in plastic and other chemicals and residues found in mainstream pads and tampons.

Official advice is to opt for a silicone cup. Silicone is better than rubber because of its smooth surface which doesn't allow Staph bacteria to build up. It's very important that the cup is washed thoroughly between periods using mechanical action to remove any biofilm from the surface.

If I am travelling/ on the move for extended periods of time do I have to boil my menstrual cup between every period?

Yes you should properly disinfect your cup before and after your period starts.

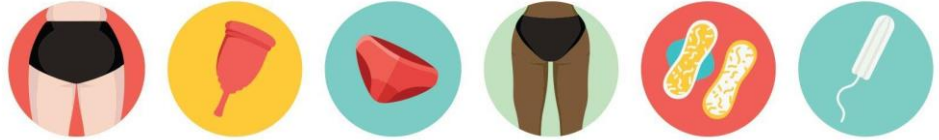
If you're unable to boil your cup (some brands don't recommend boiling anyway) then a sterilising tablet in a foldable cup (or any other cup/bowl) will do the job just as well:

<https://www.nomoret taboo.org/store/RubyCup-Foldable-Steriliser-Cup-p60272081>

What is the shelf-life of a menstrual cup? Should I still replace it if it looks in good condition?

This will vary from brand to brand and depends on how well you take care of the cup. Some people will use their cup for up to 10 years and others prefer to change it yearly. Some discolouration is normal because blood is quite strong, but with good cleaning you can minimize this.

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Can teenagers use menstrual cups?

Yes! Because menstrual cups don't dry you out like tampons you can even do a 'dry-run' before your period starts if you like!

Here's some tips from Lunette about first time use:

<https://www.lunette.com/blogs/news/teens-menstrual-cups-tips-for-first-time-use?p64=4>

Is there any risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) from wearing a menstrual cup?

Like with any internal period product, there is a risk of TSS. But a clean, properly used menstrual cup means the chances are very small. Take good care of personal hygiene and always choose a trusted brand.

TSS is an infection caused by bacteria entering through wounds or mucous membrane. It is an extremely rare, potentially fatal disease occurring in those with or without a uterus, and children. TSS is usually connected with absorbent tampons.

SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- sudden high fever
- sore throat
- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- dizziness
- a rash resembling sunburn
- muscle aches
- fainting or blackouts

Early recognition and cure is vital, so if you have some of the symptoms mentioned above, remove the menstrual cup immediately, contact your doctor and express your concerns about the possibility of TSS.

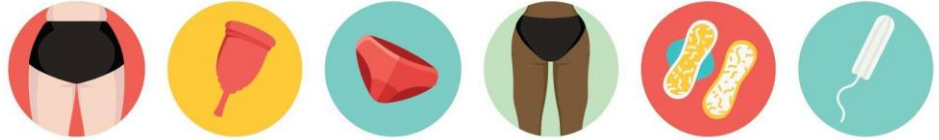
Where can I go for advice on using my menstrual cup?

Lunette: Lunette has a very good and responsive customer service so you can email them anytime at info@lunette.com.

For urgent queries Mooncup have an advice line run by qualified medical health professionals - they're happy to answer any questions/ work through problems with usage: advice@mooncup.co.uk or +44(0) 1273 673 845

There are also loads of blogs, Youtube videos and forums on this topic so google your question!

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How often should they be changed?

You can wear a menstrual cup for 6 to 12 hours, depending on whether or not you have a heavy flow. This means you can use a cup for overnight protection. Just like all internal period products (including tampons) studies suggest that menstrual cups carry a risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome. The main way that bacteria are carried is from the hands, so it is advised to wash hands before emptying your cup.

At £15-20, aren't these quite an expensive option?

Yes, initially this is true. But if they are used again and again, they save money on buying 100s of disposables. Happily, there is no need to carry lots of spares as the menstrual cup is reusable and can last up to 10 years with proper care (this varies between brands). Tampons cost an average of £1,200 over a person's lifetime.

Can I use a cup if I'm a virgin?

Yes, if you are a virgin, you can use a menstrual cup, although you should be aware that inserting the cup may rupture the hymen. However, by medical standards, virginity is not defined by the state of the hymen; you remain a virgin until you participate in sexual intercourse. Inserting the cup may rupture the hymen but so can riding a horse, doing sports or visiting the gynaecologist! Read more about virginity, the hymen and using a menstrual cup: <https://rubycup.com/blogs/news/hymens-virginity-and-menstrual-cups-in-east-africa>

Can I go to the toilet whilst wearing the cup?

Yes, no problem! Unlike tampons, which have a string that can end up soaking up unwanted fluids, with a cup you can go to the bathroom without a worry.

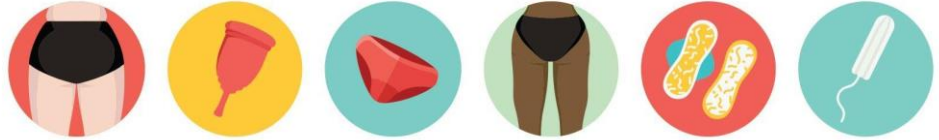
Reusable Pads

They look like they will leak. How do they work?

Like disposable pads, reusables have layers of natural and synthetic materials that absorb blood and hold it within the pad. As with all products, if a period is heavy and a product isn't changed regularly, there is always a chance of leaking.

Reusable pads are used in the same way that you'd use a disposable pad, but they aren't squeaky or sticky and can be washed and reused again for years! Reusable pads come in a range of sizes, materials and patterns. Some people use these in conjunction with the menstrual cup or for overnight bleeding.

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A single reusable pad starts at around [£4.50](#) and a starter kit will cost about [£30](#). Some people make their own! If you look after them well, they can last up to 10 years!

What are reusable pads made of?

This depends on the brand of reusable pad - they can be made from 100% natural cotton, flannel, fleece or bamboo. Some contain polyester which is a type of plastic that is commonly found in clothing.

They look like they would be sweaty and smelly; are they?

If they are made with breathable, natural fabrics, they are less sweaty and smelly than a disposable pad.

What happens if they need to be changed at school or out and about?

It's recommended that you have a [wet bag](#) (a waterproof bag) or a soap bag to put used pads in. At the end of your cycle, all the pads can be washed in the washing machine on a cool wash.

Aren't they stained with blood after the first use?

Blood comes out of any fabric if it is soaked in cold water first. For heavier stains a stain remover can be used, such as [BunchaFarmers](#) stain remover.

Isn't washing clothes in the machine with period blood disgusting?

Period blood doesn't need to be considered disgusting; it is no different to any other blood from the body. The pads can be rinsed with cold water until it runs clear before putting the pad into the washing machine on a long cycle (30° or lower). They can be washed in the same wash as the rest of your laundry - don't worry, they won't turn everything red! You can also hand-wash them.

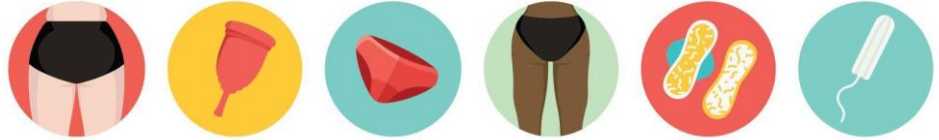
Washing machines clean things thoroughly so other garments won't end up with blood on them, especially if pads are soaked or rinsed first.

There are a wide variety of [mesh sacks](#) that you can put the pads in for washing, if you wish to be discreet.

If you're out and about and won't have access to washing facilities for a while, most brands recommend that pads are rinsed in cold water and then stored in a wetbag until you're ready to wash them.

Fabric softeners and tumble drying are not advised as they may decrease the performance and absorbency of the pads.

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Many pads come in dark and patterned colours so even if light staining occurs you won't really notice it.

How long will cloth pads last?

Most pads are designed to last around 10 years. Ultimately, it will depend on how well you look after them. For example, if you hand wash your pads they won't last as long as if you machine wash them, but they will still last several years.

How many re-usable pads should I buy?

This will depend on how heavy your flow is, how often you want to wash them and whether you wear them in conjunction with another product. There is no set amount for the number of pads you need but we would recommend starting with around 5 if this is your primary period care. You can also wash your pads part way through your cycle, which will cut down on the number of pads you'll need to get through a period.

Some pads come with inserts that you can swap rather than changing the whole pad. In this case you'll need 1 pad per day, and about as many inserts to match the number of times you would normally change your disposable pad each day.

You can buy different sizes and absorbencies and some will come in their own washbag. To find out which size of pad you need, measure what you're using now and choose a comparable size.

How do the reusable pads attach to my pants?

Reusable pads have poppers on the wings which connect around your underwear to hold them in place. As long as your underwear is also snug fitting you shouldn't have any issues.

Will reusable pads leak?

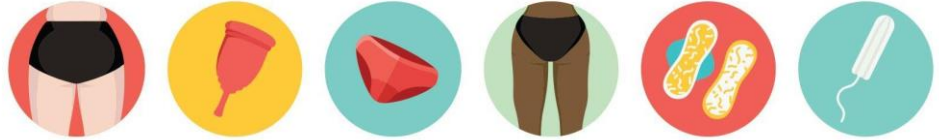
Just like disposable pads, if your periods are really heavy, or you leave the pad on for too long then it's possible you may leak a little. However cloth pads come in a range of sizes and absorbencies so you can choose a design to suit your body's needs.

Most reusable pads come with a leakproof lining.

How do I deal with changing a pad when I'm away from home?

Once you've used a pad, you can fold it and clip it together, before popping it into a wash bag. You can rinse it in cold water to reduce the risk of staining

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(but it's not totally necessary) and then wash your pads in the washing machine when home or hand-wash them.

How long will a reusable pad last for?

If taken care of properly, a reusable pad will last between 3-10 years.

Do reusable pads smell?

Period blood is not smelly - it's only when the blood oxidises and comes into contact with perfumed pads that it starts smelling strange.

A slightly metallic smell is totally normal, but if your period blood smells [fishy](#) or [rotten](#) then head to the GP.

If you're worried about body odor, change your reusable pad more often. If you're worried about pad odor, wash them more regularly and make sure that they're not stored in an airtight container.

Are reusable pads recommended for pregnant women?

Throughout pregnancy you may experience an increased amount of discharge and during postpartum bleeding you may have a tender perineum. Reusable pads are recommended for pregnant women and also for postpartum bleeding.

Is there any risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) from wearing reusable period pads?

No, TSS only occurs with internal products.

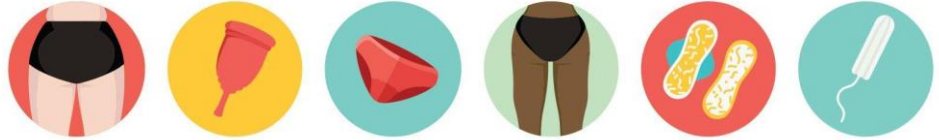
[Period Pants](#)

Period pants are absorbent underwear that you can wash and reuse again for 2-3 years. Period pants come in a range of styles (including thong and boxer styles) and absorbencies. Some have inserts that you can remove and change as you would with a pad. Some people use these in conjunction with the menstrual cup or for overnight bleeding.

A pair of period pants will cost you between [£9 - £31](#) and each pair will last you at least 2 years (if cared for properly).

The gusset looks thin. Do they really work?

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Period pants have varying absorbency from half a tampon to four tampons worth of blood. On heavy days or overnight you might like to try them with a menstrual cup or a tampon for ease of mind.

The pants use layers of natural and manmade fabrics that work in different ways to absorb blood, as well as creating a wicking and breathable layer so there is no wet feeling.

How do they not end up being stained?

As with the above care advice for reusable pads, period pants are best rinsed in cold water immediately to get out any blood; they can then be washed at 30 degrees along with the rest of your laundry. Most period pants are black so you won't notice slight discolouration.

At £9-31, aren't these quite an expensive option if you must have multiple pants per period?

Yes, this is true. But if they are used again and again they may still save money on buying 100s of disposables.

How many pairs will I need?

This depends on how heavy your flow is and how often you want to do laundry! For a cycle of 4-5 days, 3-5 pairs are recommended. Of course, if you wash them more regularly you can buy fewer pairs and rotate them quickly! Some pants are compatible with removable absorbent inserts that you can replace like you would a pad, which means you have to change the pants less often (e.g. Luna Undies).

What do I do with my period pants if I am changing away from home?

Period pants can be folded and stored in a laundry bag until you get home/to a washing machine. You can always rinse them with cold water whilst you're away if you won't be able to put them in a washing machine for a few days.

How long will a pair last?

One pair of FLUX Undies will last at least 3 years.

LunaUndies will last between 3-5 years.

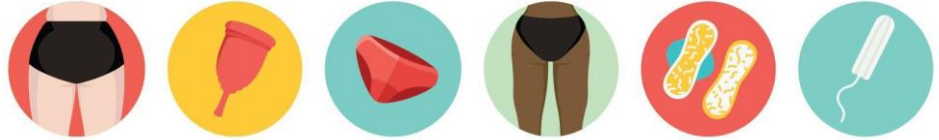
One pair of WUKA lasts up to 25 washes.

THINX pants should last 2 years.

Modibodi pants last between 6 months - 2 years.

Of course, these all depend on you taking good care of your period pants and reading the instructions!

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Are there different types available?

Yes, there are many types of period pants! Almost all period pants currently on the market hold 1-2 tampons worth of flow, except WUKA pants which hold 4 tampons worth.

Most brands will have a variety of designs, absorbencies and sizes, so browse a few sites before you buy.

Most brands will have a variety of designs, absorbencies and sizes. We love Cheeky Wipes affordable range, who offer boxer shorts, thongs, lacy styles, sporty styles and more!

Will period pants hold enough blood to wear them alone/ how absorbent are they?

Some period pants can absorb up to 8 tampons worth of blood, whilst others may absorb between 2-6 tampons worth.

For the less absorbent pants, if you're on a heavy day you will probably want to use a menstrual cup or organic tampon as well as your period pants.

However, everybody's flow is different! The best way to find out is to test the pants and have some spare products in your bag for emergencies.

Cheeky Wipes have a 45 day trial policy, so if you really don't get on with them you can return them and get your money back.

How do I wash my period pants?

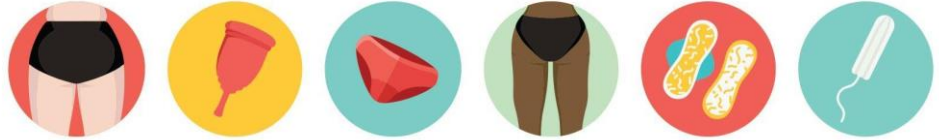
Make sure you check the washing instructions on your product as each brand is different.

Most brands recommend that you rinse the pants with cold water and then throw them in a cold black wash (at 30 degrees or lower), preferably in a laundry bag (as is recommended with any high quality underwear). You can put them in the machine with the rest of your laundry and use your usual stain remover and washing powder.

If the pants are heavily saturated, consider soaking them for an hour before you wash them. You can then hang-dry the undies inside out, bearing in mind that they will take longer to dry than your normal pants because of the absorbent layers.

Fabric softeners and tumble drying are not advised as they may decrease the performance and absorbency of the pants. Never use bleach!

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Will period pants stain?

Some period pants are not treated with stain resistant chemicals because they can be damaging for marine life when the pants are washed.

Most period pants are black so even if they are slightly stained it won't be visible. That being said, some people prefer light-coloured products because it can be easier to tell when the pants need to be changed.

If you rinse your pants with cold water as soon as possible after use you can reduce the chances of staining.

If staining does occur you can spot-treat them using this natural product:
LINK: <https://lunapads.com/products/buncha-farmers-stain-remover>

Do period pants smell?

Period blood shouldn't have a strong odour. With disposable products, the plastic and perfumes create an anaerobic (no air) environment, which can often lead to an increase in bacteria and an unpleasant odour. Many period pants are cotton or bamboo, and so they're very breathable!

To keep your pants smelling great for years and years, it's important to make sure to wash and care for them properly. If the pants are heavily saturated, consider soaking them for an hour or quickly rinsing them out before washing properly.

To 'strip' the pants as you would with diapers you can wash them over and over again in fresh batches of cold water until the water runs clear and there's no suds or residue coming out in the rinse water. This means you've removed all build-up of old detergent/soap residue (which will catch and hold onto odours). Then, hang to dry in direct sunlight.

A slightly metallic smell is totally normal, but if your period blood smells fishy or rotten then head to the GP.

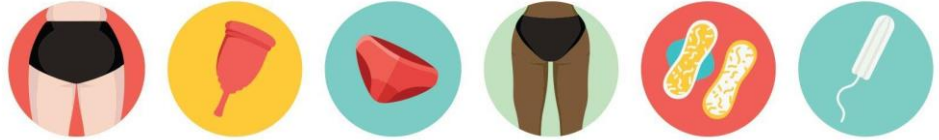
Can period pants be used for urinary incontinence or light bladder leaks?

Yes, absolutely! Period pants are one of the most comfortable period products on the market and their shape makes them secure from leaks.

Hazar on using Cheeky Wipes pants

"I struggle with moderate/heavy incontinence, and these pants are fantastic. Unlike others I have tried, you truly remain dry in these. My confidence is

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back; I'm not worried about smelling like pee or leaking and chafing my legs. As soon as we have more money, I'm ordering more!"

Are period pants recommended for pregnant women?

Throughout pregnancy you may experience an increased amount of discharge and during postpartum bleeding you may have a tender perineum. Period pants are recommended for pregnant women and also for postpartum bleeding.

Is there any risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) from wearing menstrual underwear?

No, TSS only occurs with internal products.

Can I wear period pants as a swimsuit?

Swimming during your period can be tricky. Period pants aren't ideal for swimming because they will absorb any water they come into contact with - leaving limited room to absorb your period. Plus, any menstrual flow already in your undies could seep out into the pool when you get in.

We recommend [WUKA's period bikini bottoms](#) OR a [menstrual cup](#) for swimming!

Tampons

How old can you be to use a tampon?

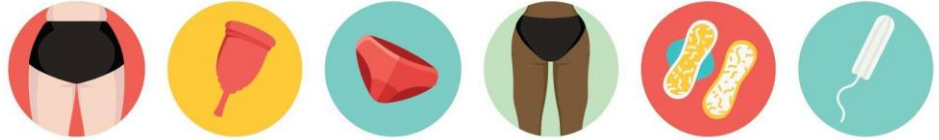
As soon as you start having your period, you're old enough to use tampons. Pads are advisable for the first period, which will help gauge heavy and lighter days.

Are tampons painful?

It can take a bit of getting used to, but once inserted correctly (high-enough up in the vagina) then there should be no discomfort and you should not feel the tampon. Some people experience vaginal dryness from using tampons as they absorb natural lubrication. If you find this uncomfortable you may like to try another internal product like a menstrual cup, or an external product like disposable pads, reusable pads or period pants.

How often should a tampon be changed?

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Depending on flow, a tampon should be changed every 4-8 hours. Tampons must not be left in any longer than 8 hours as there is a risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome.

What is Toxic Shock Syndrome?

According to NHS UK, *'Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) is a rare but life-threatening condition caused by bacteria getting into the body and releasing harmful toxins'*.

It's often associated with tampon use in young women, but it can affect anyone of any age - including men and children.

TSS gets worse very quickly and can be fatal if not treated promptly. But if it's diagnosed and treated early on, most people make a full recovery.

SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- sudden high fever
- sore throat
- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- dizziness
- a rash resembling sunburn
- muscle aches
- fainting or blackouts

Early recognition and cure is vital, so if you have some of the symptoms mentioned above, remove the menstrual cup immediately, contact your doctor and express your concerns about the possibility of TSS.

Take good care of personal hygiene, never leave an internal product inside the body for longer than recommended, and always choose a trusted brand.

Why are there different tampon sizes?

The sizes are to absorb different flows. If a tampon becomes saturated within an hour or two, look to use a higher absorbency tampon. On the other hand, if you remove the tampon and it feels stuck or dry, try a lighter absorbency.

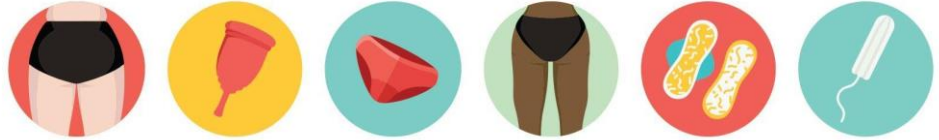
What should I do if I leak?

It is perfectly normal to leak during a period and there is no need to feel ashamed. It generally means you need a higher absorbency tampon, or you could wear a panty liner, pad or period pants as extra protection. The best way to get blood out of underwear is to rinse or soak in cold water.

What is the difference between applicators and non-applicators?

Applicators are available in plastic and cardboard options. The applicators push the tampon inside the vagina and must be disposed of in the bin after

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use. Non-applicator tampons may have a fine coat of polyester (plastic) which helps insertion, using a finger. Organic or plastic-free tampons do not contain this coating of polyester. Non-applicator tampons are called digital tampons.

Are tampons suitable for sleeping?

Yes, tampons be worn for up to 8 hours during the night, although if it is a heavy day, it may be worth using a panty liner, pad or period pants for extra protection. If you sleep for longer than 8 hours, external period protection (e.g. a pad, period pants) is recommended instead of a tampon, due to the risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Are tampons suitable for exercise or swimming?

Yes.

How should tampons be disposed of?

All components - wrappers, applicators and used tampons - must be placed in a bin unless they specify that they can go into your home-composter or recycling (cardboard boxes and paper wrappers).

Tampons must not be flushed as they can cause sewer blockages that pollute our rivers, beaches and ocean.

[Reusable Tampon Applicators](#)

DAME's website answers questions about their reusable tampon applicator: <https://wearedame.co/apps/help-center>

[Disposable Pads](#)

What are the different types of pads?

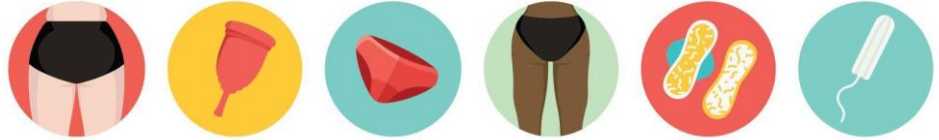
Pads come in a range of absorbencies, sizes and shapes. The smallest pads with the lowest absorbency are called liners. Generally Overnight pads are the largest and most absorbent option.

How often should a pad be changed?

It is recommended that you change your pad every 4-6 hours. If a pad becomes damp on the outside, it is an indication that it needs changing as it has reached full absorbency.

Can pads be used for swimming or exercise?

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Not for swimming, but yes for exercise. There are very thin options available which are better suited for this.

How should pads be disposed of?

Wrap the pad up in its wrapper or toilet roll and place it in a bin. Pads must never be flushed as they can cause sewer blockages or pollute rivers, beaches and the sea.

Organic tampons, pads and liners

What single-use products can I use that are better for the environment?

Go for [100% organic cotton](#) and if using a tampon make sure that you change it at least every 6 hours. Use an [organic menstrual pad](#) at night to help reduce the chances of toxic shock syndrome. Avoid tampons made from rayon, a rayon cotton mix, or anything fragranced.

NOTE: Even organic and biodegradable products should not be flushed down the loo! They may take months to break down, blocking pipes, causing flooding and polluting marine environment.

Organic

What is the difference between organic and non-organic?

The difference is in the materials they are made from. Organic means the materials have been produced without chemicals and pesticides. It also means the materials are unbleached with chlorine and there are no synthetic, plastic-based materials in the products. Organic pads are not perfumed, either.

Why is that better?

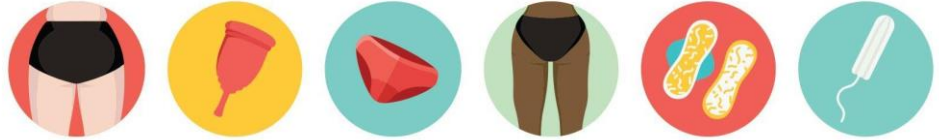
People may choose to use organic menstrual products because they don't want chemicals, plastic and chlorine close to their skin. Many people report problems from using non-organic menstrual products, such as itchiness or thrush. This is believed to be caused by the synthetic materials and chemicals upsetting the pH balance of the vagina.

Organic pads do not contain chemical fragrances either. Read [our blog](#) to find out more about what 'organic' means.

If they are biodegradable and compostable, what does this mean?

This means that in the right conditions they would break down, because they have no plastic in them. The 'right conditions' are not present in landfill as landfill sites are too compacted for anything to break down (aerobic digestion requires air). They can't go in the food waste bin either, as this anaerobic

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digestion process is shorter than is required for menstrual products to break down (any plastic materials that end up in a food waste bin will be pulled out and burned).

So, if you want to compost them, it is best to do this in a home composter and anticipate it will take 18-24 months. At present, compost facilities available to process biodegradable or compostable plastics do not exist commercially, but this could change in the future, if there is a bigger move away from oil-based plastics.

So, if they don't biodegrade in landfill, should they be flushed down the toilet?

No. While they are made from natural materials, they still don't break down like toilet paper and could cause blockages that lead to overflowing sewers and pollution in our waterways.

What does biodegradable and compostable mean?

Head over to our [Bioplastics page](#) to unpick this tricky topic!

So if they don't biodegrade in landfill, should they be flushed down the toilet?

NEVER! While they are made from natural materials, they still don't break down like toilet paper and could cause blockages that may lead to ocean pollution. Be sure to have a bin in your bathroom and only ever flush pee, toilet paper and pool!

[Additional FAQs](#)

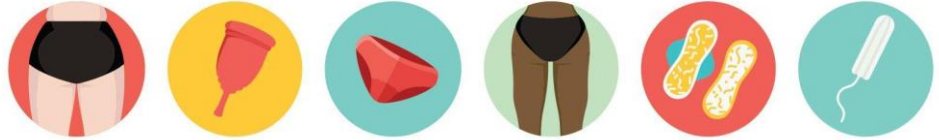
Why are reusable products better than biodegradable/organic products?

On average, a menstruating person throws away 115 - 135kg of pads, tampons and applicators away in their lifetime. Menstrual products that are properly disposed of (put in the bin and not flushed!) create 200,000 tonnes of landfilled waste every year in the UK. The break-down of these products in landfill contributes to the production of greenhouse gases, just like other bio-waste.

The benefits are not just environmental, by switching to reusable products we can save up to 94% of what we would have spent on disposable tampons and pads over our lifetime!

We are very aware that there are certain circumstances and occasions where people may need to use throwaway products and we totally recognise and support this. On those occasions, opt for organic products instead of those

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that contain plastic, bleach and other undivulged chemicals. And remember to never flush anything other than pee, paper and poo!

Is it OK to use conventional products alongside reusables?

Of course! Just as some people use a combination of disposable pads and tampons and use different products as their flow changes, some people use a combination of disposable / reusable products in the same way. Many people use multiple products during heavy flow, or switch to disposable organic products when they're at festivals, caught short, etc.

NB: it won't work using a pad on top of period pants. Reusable pads are lined with a leakproof material which will make the addition of absorbency of the pants ineffectual.

What do I do if I am going camping or to a festival?

Reusables can actually be more practical when you're living outdoors, because you don't have to worry about finding a bin for your disposable tampons and pads. However, they can pose new challenges depending on the type of washing facilities that are available!

If you're using a cup make sure your hands are clean and bring a reusable water bottle into the toilet (or bush!) with you so you can rinse your cup off even if there's no sink. You can also buy [cup wipes](#) or use a [sterilising tablet](#) (like what you'd use for a baby bottle) in a foldable cup.

Reusable pads and period pants can be folded and stored in a [wet bag](#) until you get back to a washing machine, or you can wash them by hand!

We do acknowledge that there are certain times and occasions where people may need to use throwaway products and we totally recognise and support this. On those occasions, opt for organic products instead of those that contain plastic, bleach and other undivulged chemicals.

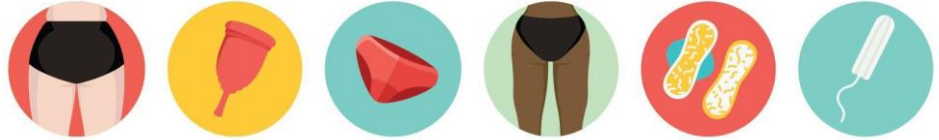
Are reusable period products messy?

Period pants are potentially the least messy option because they stay in place and no fiddling around is required. Although the menstrual cup can be messy when you start learning to use it, once you've mastered the technique you can avoid any leaks or spills.

By changing a reusable pad at the appropriate time you can ~~also~~ avoid leaks.

Some people use the menstrual cup in combination with period pants or reusable pads, for extra security and peace of mind on heavy days.

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What if my partner or friends think that using reusables is weird?

How you manage your flow is your choice! Let your partner/ friends/ family know that this is your body and your decision. No one should make you feel ashamed for choosing any menstrual product.

The more we talk about periods and period products the more 'normal' and accepted the subject will become.

How much money will I save by switching to reusable products?

Over your lifetime you can expect to save up to 94% of what you would have spent on disposables, by switching to reusables! Don't let the initial financial investment put you off - it more than makes up for itself over time. (2)

Period equality charity Bloody Good Period estimates that the average lifetime cost of having a period is £4,800. (3)

Menstrual cups cost £9 - £24.90 and will last you up to 10 years.

A set of reusable pads will cost you about £10 - £35 and some can last up to 10 years.

A pair of period pants will cost you between £10 - £31 and each pair will last you at least 2 years.

These timelines are all dependent on you properly looking after your products so be sure to read the washing/ maintenance instructions that come with whatever product you opt for!

The exact amount of money you save will depend on what and how many products you decide to use, and what single-use products you move away from.

Which reusable period products are the most comfortable?

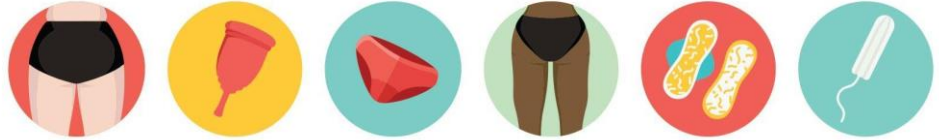
This is very much a personal preference. Many people find reusables more comfortable than disposable products - no squeaky, expanded pads or tampons that dry you out.

Some people say that they can forget all about their period when they're using a menstrual cup because they can't feel a thing. Reusable pads can be made of super soft cotton and bamboo, which feel like a luxurious rug in your pants! Period pants don't move or shift in your underwear and sit comfortably without requiring you to fiddle around or insert anything internally.

Are reusables hygienic?

Absolutely! Reusable products can be even more hygienic than disposables because you're able to wash them yourself and ensure that they're clean. Just as when you purchase underwear at the store you should always wash your

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reusable product before you use it simply because most factories are dusty, etc.

Disposable tampons, pad and liners with layers and layers of packaging aren't treated as medical products here in the UK so they're not required to be kept sterile. They're made in factories and are not required to follow any food grade factory standards, including divulging information about what exactly is in their products.

Suggested sources of additional information:

- [Precious Stars YouTube](#) channel is a great source of short, informative vlogs, all delivered by a teenage girl, Bryony.
- [A Dad's Guide to Periods: Pads 4 Dads](#) from [Hey Girls](#) recognises that chatting about periods can be hard, especially if you don't experience them yourself.
- [My Period Cards](#) from [Hey Girls](#) have been designed to help you start positive conversations about periods. Each pack contains 50 flash cards with an image on one side and discussion points on the other. The cards cover everything from the biology of menstruation to stigma and taboo; from discharge to menstrual cups. These cards are appropriate for the classroom, the youth club, the community centre or a one-to-one chat at home. My Period Cards will really help you get the conversations flowing!
- [Break the Barriers](#) from [Plan International UK](#) is a first-of-a-kind report which documents girls' experiences of periods in the UK.

Where can I buy products and are there any discounts?

There are loads of amazing brands on the market offering a full range of reusable products. To make life easier, we have curated a list to get you started, with some exclusive offers to make it even more affordable: [Check the City to Sea website FAQs for up to date discount codes.](#)

Did you know that by switching to reusable period products you could save up to 94% of what you would have spent on disposables in your lifetime - and you'll help stop a huge amount of plastic pollution at source!