

Re-think & Re-indigenize: Menstruation

Make safe, informed
decisions for your
menstruation needs.

Learn about a few traditions
and American Indian
community resources in the
in San Francisco



Important Terms to Know

DE-COLONIZE eliminate the influences and attitudes from colonization

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT movement that advocates against the use of toxic chemicals and addresses the health disparities resulting from environmental effects

GENDER JUSTICE aims to end inequalities between the genders in all areas of life

HOLISTIC approach that looks at the treatment of whole person including body, thoughts, feelings, and spirit

INTERSECTION overlap at which multiple parts/ideas/identities come together

MENSTRUAL INEQUITY the unequal access to affordable and safe menstrual products, education, and reproductive care

PERIOD POVERTY refers to the lack of access to menstrual products and other menstrual necessities

RE-INDIGENIZE a movement that aims to decolonize spaces and promotes both the revival and celebration of traditional teachings and practices

STERILIZATION process to destroy germs that can contaminate a product which could cause harm

TOXIC poisonous; harmful to health

UNCEDED refers to territories not handed over or legally signed over

UNHYGIENIC unclean, unsanitary; may lead to infections

Fact Sheet

1 in 5 girls miss school due to lack of access to menstrual products

Risk of infections like urinary tract infections and bacterial vaginosis increase from unhygienic alternatives for menstrual products

The first menstruation cycle often signifies an important transition from girlhood to womanhood in many cultures

Toxic chemicals are often found in menstrual and intimate care products and are not required to be listed to be sold in most states

California has passed/enacted 5 menstrual equity bills that work together to:

- Require free menstrual products in all restrooms as public schools grades 6–12 and higher level educational institutions
- Require all ingredients to be listed by weight on the packages and boxes of menstrual products manufactured after January 1, 2023

Disposable Menstrual Products

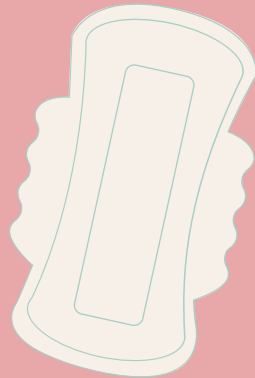
Disposable menstrual products produce a lot of waste as they are single-use products.

However, these products may be convenient depending on the resources available and may be easier to maintain personal hygiene through regular changing and washing of hands.

Disposable Pads

Disposable pads are placed in underwear to absorb menstrual flow. They come in various sizes and should only be worn a maximum of 8 hours, regardless of how light the flow may be.

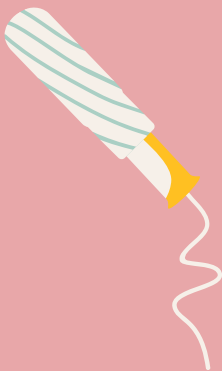
Product should be disposed of in waste bins, never flushed.



Tampons

Tampons can come within a cardboard or plastic applicator. The applicator is inserted into the vaginal canal and is pushed to release the tampon, with no pain and no discomfort. They should not be worn for more than 8 hours.

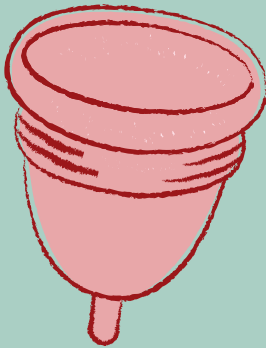
The tampon should be removed by pulling string. Tampons may clog pipes and should be disposed of in waste bins.



Reusable Menstrual Products

Reusable products produce much less waste than disposable products and, though pricey, provide more bang for your buck.

It is important to note that a reliable source of water is needed for safe use of these products and are not as widely available as their disposable counter parts.



Menstrual Cups

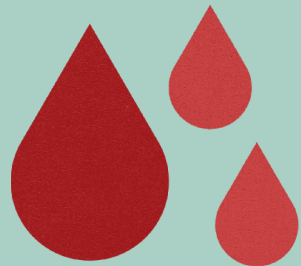
Non-absorbant menstrual device, usually made of medical-grade silicon, that is inserted into the vaginal canal. Cup should be emptied every 6–12 hours and rinsed before reinsertion.

Removal of menstrual cups should be done carefully to break the seal that is formed when inserted. Sterilization with boiling water is required at the end of each cycle.

Period Underwear

Underwear with extra layers of fabric that may need to be changed throughout the day or worn in combination with other menstrual devices.

Period underwear can be washed the same way as other underwear.



Toxic Ingredients

in Pads and Tampons

dioxins

furans

methyldibromo glutaronitrile

unknown fragrances

in Intimate Wipes and Washes

methylchloroisothiazolinone

methylothiazolinone

parabens

quaternium-15

DMDM hydantoin

iodopropynyl butylcarbamate

Triclosan

D&C Red No. 33

Ext D&C Violet #2

FD&C Yellow #5

unknown fragrances



Not every menstrual product is created equal

Whether disposable or reusable, it is important to not only know what chemicals are safe for you and the Earth but also which products meet your needs.

LIVING ON UNCEDDED RAMAYTUSH OHLONE LAND

The Ramaytush Ohlone are the original peoples of the San Francisco peninsula, as such, it is important to acknowledge and respect their territory.

Re-indigenize to de-colonize

The effects of colonization on the indigenous community continues to contribute to the erasure of culture, history, and indigenous peoples across the nation. Re-indigenizing aims to de-colonize the way of life and to celebrate culture, history, our ancestors, and the individuals that are here today.

Coming-of-age ceremonies are just one of the many traditions that have been widely stigmatized as targets of colonization.

Respect for the Earth

Conserving nature and respecting the land we live on is an important value shared within the community. The traditional teachings and celebrations, including coming-of-age ceremonies, incorporate this view.

When choosing menstruation products, it is important to know the environmental effects of each to make informed decisions but what is the most important is choosing safe products that meet your needs.

Culture & Traditions

Menstruation is celebrated in many cultures as traditions gather the community during this monumental time in an individual's life.

The Anishinaabe: Berry Fast

Ojibwe, Bodewadmi, and Odawa Nations' Rite-of Passage

A year-long ritual that begins with the first menstrual cycle in which the individual fasts from eating berries of any kind.

This celebration teaches discipline, patience, and strength during a time in which they obtain wisdom from women in the community. This ritual ends with a coming out ceremony as the girl is reintroduced as a woman.



The Apache: Sunrise Ceremony

A Rite-of-Passage Ceremony

In this four-day long ceremony, a girl becomes Changing Woman temporarily as the community comes together to celebrate.



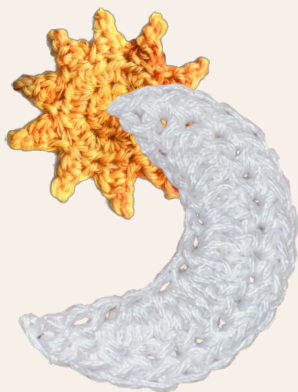
Instilling discipline and good manners, these days are filled with dancing, feasting, blessings and rituals as the woman wears ceremonial buckskins throughout and for the four days following.

The Diné: *Kinaaldá* Ceremony

Navajo Coming-of-Age Ceremony

A time of self-discovery, this four-day-long ceremony begins during or after the first menstrual cycle in which the girl runs and helps community members each day.

Songs, prayers, and blessings from the community members help shape the girl into a woman during this time. On the last night, the Blessing Way ceremony is held and as the last song of the ceremony is sung, the woman runs towards the rising sun on the final day.



The Hoopa Valley Tribe: *Ch'iwa:l*

Flower Dance Ceremony

A 3- to 10-day public ceremony that is filled with ritual activities, this ceremony celebrates new menstruators as community members join together to offer advice and teach songs, skills, and prayers.

Running is an important part of the ceremony as it believed the way in which the woman runs will tell of the life she will live and each day she ceremoniously bathes in the river with herbs.

Resources

Kwek Society

Education and Advocacy

Nonprofit aimed to eliminate period poverty, educate on menstruation as a time of celebration, and provide products for Indigenous individuals and communities.

kweksociety.org

Women's Voices for the Earth

Culture and Advocacy

Organization focused on education, advocacy, and organizing for issues at the intersection of gender justice and the environmental health movement. Past and present campaigns are focused on presence of unsafe chemicals and hidden ingredients marketed to women by industries.

womensvoices.org

California Consortium for Urban Indian Health

Health

Alliance of Urban Indian Health Programs and substance abuse facilities within California with the aim to share resources and spread awareness to better support the health and wellness needs of American Indians in urban settings.

cuih.org

Resources

Native American Health Center

Health

Nonprofit and Federally Qualified Health Center that serves the Native population and underserved communities in the Bay Area. Provides medical, dental, behavioral health, community wellness, and social service programs with the use of holistic model of care with locations in San Francisco and Oakland.

nativehealth.org

American Indian Cultural District

Culture and Community

Dedicated to celebrate, honor, and recognize American Indian culture, people, and contributions. Works to empower, provide resources, and create spaces for the urban American Indian community in San Francisco. Releases monthly newsletters sharing updates, meetings, and community events around the Bay Area.

americanindianculturaldistrict.org

American Indian Cultural Center of San Francisco

Culture and Community

Promotes the well-being of the American Indian community with the goal of increasing the visibility and creating spaces for American Indian cultures in an urban setting. Events in the Bay Area are regularly shared on Instagram and Facebook.

aiccsf.org

References

Fact Sheet (page 2)

The Kwek Society – "End Period Poverty"

Women's Voices for the Earth – "'Bill Tracker: Menstrual Equity Policies in the United States"

Women's Voices for the Earth – "Intimate Care Products"

University of Michigan – "Changing the Cycle: Period Poverty as a Public Health Crisis" by Ashley Rapp and Sidonie Kilpatrick

Menstruation Products (pages 3-5)

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) – "Menstrual Hygiene"

Women's Voices for the Earth – "Chem Fatale Fact Sheet"

UNICEF – "Guide to Menstrual Hygiene Materials" (2019)

Tradition & Culture (pages 7-9)

The Kwek Society – "Traditional Teachings"

KJZZ Pheonix – "Changing Woman, Part 1: Kinaaldá" by Laurel Morales

Mescalero Apache Tribe – "Our Culture"

Navajo Times – "Kinaaldá: Coming of age in traditional Diné ceremony" by Bazhribah

North Coast Journal – "The Flower Dancers" by Cutcha Risling Baldy