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How to deal with your periods outdoors.

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How do you deal with your period when you are out adventuring? It might be going for a walk, being at a festival, doing your Duke of Edinburgh award, biking or expeditioning.



It is probably one of the most commonly asked questions I get asked when working in the mountains and leading expeditions. I've had my fair share of having to deal with my period outside and an equal amount of mishaps. Unfortunately, there is still a bit of embarrassment out there (unnecessarily so). So here's your go to guide to help you on your way.

1. Get prepared

This is key. I always go out with the following in a discreet bag:

- Tampons/sanitary towels
- Hand sanitiser
- Wet wipes
- Toilet roll
- Nappy bags
- 2 zip lock bags (ones that you can easily open one handed)
- 1 dark coloured and thicker nappy bag (this is for putting the smaller bags into)
- A spare pair of pants

2. Find a suitable spot

Easier said than done sometimes. It's useful to get a friend to be a 'look out' (that's if you have a friend with you). Trees, walls, dips in the land can be useful to look for. I advise weeing at the same time (two birds with one stone and all that). Remember to look at the ground below you, it should be flat, or angled away from you, you don't want any rocks or raised bits of earth getting in the way of you weeing. Otherwise you'll get a load of splashback. You'll also need to be 100m away from a water source (river/lake etc). Now get your equipment ready and have it to the side of you. If it is super windy or raining, keep it in a handy pocket.

3. Change sanitary item

This is my procedure:

- Wet wipe hands (to get any dirt off)
- Sanitise hands
- Wee & change sanitary item, I make sure I then wrap item in some toilet roll
- Put in nappy bag and tie up
- Then put that nappy bag into the larger/darker coloured one (make sure this one is ready and open so you don't need to touch the top/handles)
- Wet wipe hands
- Sanitise hands

Organisation is key, I normally have things I need laid out to the side of me. I tend to put the larger bag with all the rubbish in, in a side pocket in my rucksack - basically somewhere it can't fall out. Put it in a suitable bin when you get back from your adventure – and do **not** forget about it!

Menstrual cups

A popular choice, I personally haven't used one yet but looking forward to trying one out. I love that this is an environmentally friendly option and doesn't involve using more unnecessary disposable plastic. They last for years, and costs range from £20 to £25. If you have an IUD (coil) make sure the cup doesn't interfere with the strings (they can be cut to be shorter) and remember to regularly check the strings to make sure they're still in place.

Here is what I've surmised:

- Get the cup to fit at home, and trim the stem so it doesn't stick out too much.
- Good to use it before heading out, so you can get used to it (and trust that it's not going to leak)
- Clean hands, first with wipes then sanitiser (as above)
- Once out, you can either tip the blood out or use a tissue to wipe it out
- Use clean water to wash it and reinsert

- Obviously clean your hands again

Period pants

A great alternative to the above, once you need to change the pants you can put them in a bag and take them home with you to wash. In my mind probably better for short day trips/mini adventures as otherwise you'd have stinky and probably sweaty period pants hanging out in your bag. They have 4 layer protection, you can put inserts in them for extra protection on heavier days. I also love that they come in all shapes and sizes and go up to size 24/26 from what I've researched. They start from about £10/11 (very reasonable!) and go all the way up to £40.

It is difficult to deal with your periods when you're out and about, especially if you have heavy or painful ones. If you are doing a lot of exercise or going somewhere remote remember to fuel your body correctly and more importantly listen to it. If it is telling you it's too much, listen, slow down or turn back. The walks, hills, mountains will always be there.

Stay kind. 

Harriet x