



## A Period Guide for the Outdoors

Wherever you might be—hiking, camping or at home—periods and period care are highly personal. These Leave No Trace tips will help you stay comfortable and safe, while minimizing any potential impacts if you are on your period outdoors without access to your usual facilities.

- **Remember that your hands might not be as clean as they would be at home.**

Think about what sanitation will be available to you when choosing which menstrual products to bring. Tampons and pads can provide a more sanitary experience. Plan for packing out both any applicators and the tampons and pads themselves. A menstrual cup may help minimize packaging that needs to be packed out, yet it can pose challenges or potential exposure to bacteria, dirt, sweat, etc. if you are not able to fully clean your hands before and after insertion. Period underwear may also provide for a more sanitary option without packaging, but needs to be washed in between uses. For tampons and cups, follow guidelines and change the product as often as recommended to avoid dangerous risks, such as toxic shock syndrome.

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- **Even if your period is not meant to start during your trip, bring some period products with you.**

When your body is put under stress such as a large exertion or a new setting/activity, this can prompt your cycle to start early so make sure to carry some back up materials with you. If traveling in a group, talk and plan together to make sure there are period products available amongst the group.

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- **If you are leading or guiding a group, (whether you menstruate or not), have some menstrual and pain management products available for others.**

Educate yourself so you are poised enough to offer support if someone is unsure of what to do in an outdoor setting or is getting their period for the first time. This is especially important if you work with youth who may not feel as comfortable voicing their needs or asking for support.

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- **Plan ahead and bring any other supplies that might make you feel more comfortable.**

This can include cleansing wipes (make sure to pack these out), some sort of pain management if you experience heavy cramping (a hot water bottle can work well), hand sanitizer, specific foods, etc. You know yourself and your cycle best, so bring anything you might need or want access to while away from home or a store.

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- **Pack out, wash, or bury depending on your preferred menstrual products.**

- Products that are disposable or have packaging will need to be packed out. This includes, tampons, tampon applicators, pads, pad wrappers, wipes, and any used toilet paper. A sealable plastic bag with duct tape on the outside or an old water bottle designated only for trash works great for this.

- Research shows no evidence that bears are specifically attracted to menstrual waste. Regardless, just like any other trash or smellables, store these products away from your campsite and in a secure place such as a bear canister so that curious wildlife cannot gain access.
- If using period underwear, to wash them, make sure to travel 200 feet (70 big steps) from any trails, campsites or water sources and use biodegradable soap. If washing in a container, broadcast the water when you are finished.
  - Plan to have backup products to use while underwear are drying.
- For a menstrual cup, if you feel comfortable or if regulations require it, pack out the menstrual fluid. An old sealable container or a WAG bag can work for this. If not, to empty, travel 200 feet (70 big steps) from any trails, campsites, or water sources, dig a hole 6-8" deep and dispose of the contents in the hole.
  - To wash the cup, follow the steps above for period underwear. After an initial rinse, you can also boil the cup for further sanitation.
- **IMPORTANT:** For washing any product that will be inserted or in close contact with your body, remember to use clean, decontaminated water only. Do not use water from any sources that may contain pathogens without first filtering or boiling, as those can then enter your body through these products.

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- **Do some research and make sure you feel comfortable with whichever product you plan to use on your trip before heading out.**

There are many great resources that exist on this topic from videos and articles to product specific reviews. Like with any piece of gear, make sure you feel comfortable using whichever product you choose before setting off on your trip, especially if you have not used it before. It's best to try a new product out for a few periods at home before it's time to use it outdoors. Knowing what facilities will be present and how long you plan to be out may also help you decide which products to bring.

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- **Don't sweat it.**

As with anything we do outdoors, prepare for your period and try to minimize impacts, but don't be hard on yourself or feel embarrassed if something does not go as planned. Like many things on outdoor adventures, periods can be unpredictable and sometimes throw curveballs at us. Ask for help if you need it, and create space for honest and open communication. As long as you feel safe and comfortable, don't let your period stop you from continuing to explore and having a good time outside.

