

MENSTRUAL CUP: A NEW WAY TO MAINTAIN MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

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ABSTRACT

It is the main concern for every girl & woman to maintain menstrual hygiene to avoid many of the health hazards through out their life. There are various ways to maintain menstrual hygiene & protect self, but use of menstrual cup is the advanced technique to maintain menstrual hygiene. Menstrual cup is small, flexible & feminine funnel shaped cup made up of rubber or silicone. It is inserted into vagina to collect menstrual fluid. It provides complete freedom to woman to continue her routine activities without any disturbances & need of changing repeatedly. It is available in different size, form & mode. It also has eco friendly characteristic.

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What is a menstrual cup?

A menstrual cup is a type of reusable feminine hygiene product. It's a small, flexible funnel-shaped cup made of rubber or silicone that is inserted into vagina to catch and collect period fluid. Cups can hold more blood than other methods, leading many women to use them as an eco-friendly alternative to tampons. Depending on flow, it can be worn for up to 12 hours.



How does it work?

The small, flexible cup is made of silicone or latex rubber. Instead of absorbing flow, like a tampon or pad, it catches and collects it. Just before the period begins, tightly fold the menstrual cup and insert it like a tampon without an applicator. It's similar to putting a diaphragm or birth control ring in place. The cup will spring open and rest against the walls of your vagina. It forms a seal to prevent leaks. The blood then simply drips into the cup.

How to use a menstrual cup?

If you are interested in using a menstrual cup, talk with gynecologist. First you have to find out what size you need. Most menstrual cup brands sell small and large versions.

To figure out the right menstrual cup size, following points are considered:

- Age
- Length of cervix
- Amount of flow (Mild, moderate or heavy)
- Firmness and flexibility of the cup
- Cup capacity
- Strength of pelvic floor muscles
- History of vaginal delivery

Smaller menstrual cups are usually recommended for women younger than 30 years old & who have not delivered vaginally.

Larger sizes are often recommended for women who are over 30 years old, have given birth vaginally, or have a heavier period.

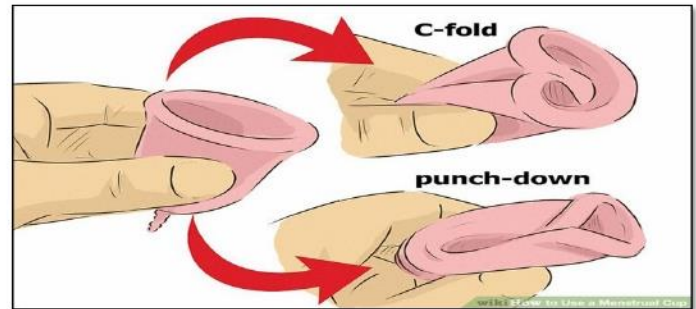
Steps to put in menstrual cup:

If you can put in a tampon, you should find it relatively easy to insert a menstrual cup.

Follow these steps to use a cup:

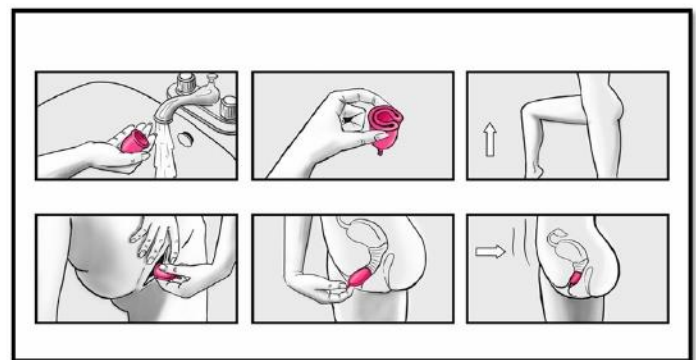
1. Wash your hands thoroughly.
2. Apply water or a water-based lube to the rim of the cup.
3. Tightly fold the menstrual cup in half, holding it in one hand with the rim facing up.

Different folds of menstrual cup:



4. Insert the cup, rim up, into vagina like you would a tampon without an applicator. It should sit a few inches below cervix.
 5. Once the cup is in vagina, rotate it. It will spring open to create an airtight seal that stops leaks.
- Menstrual cup will not be felt by the woman, if it is inserted correctly. Woman should be able to move, jump, sit, stand, and do other everyday activities without cup falling out.

When to take menstrual cup out?



It can be worn for 6 to 12 hours, depending on flow of bleeding. It should be usually removed after 12 hour mark. If it becomes full before then, you will have to empty it ahead of schedule to avoid leaks.

How to take menstrual cup out?

To take out a menstrual cup, follow these steps:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly.
2. Place index finger and thumb into vagina. Pull the stem of the cup gently until you can reach the base.
3. Pinch the base to release the seal and pull down to remove the cup.
4. Once it's out, empty the cup into the sink or toilet.

Aftercare & storage of menstrual cup:

Reusable menstrual cups should be washed and wiped clean before being reinserted into vagina. Menstrual cup should be emptied at least twice a day. Reusable menstrual cups are durable and can last for 6 months to 10 years with proper care. It should be stored in a cotton bag. Throw away disposable cups after removal.

Contraindications of menstrual cup:

- Vaginismus
- Uterine fibroids
- Endometriosis
- Allergy
- Change in uterine position

Research evidences for efficacy of menstrual cup use:

- A 2011 randomized controlled trial in Canada investigated whether silicone menstrual cups are a viable alternative to tampons and found that approximately 91% of women in the menstrual cup group said they would continue to use the cup and recommend it to others.
- In a 1991 clinical study involving 51 women, 23 of the participants (45%) found rubber menstrual

cups to be an acceptable way of managing menstrual flow.

Comparative view of different menstrual products:

Parameters	Synthetic Sanitary pads	Tampons	Menstrual cup
Insertion	No need of insertion	May be struggleful	Struggle for insertion
Staining	May be possible	May be possible	Not possible
Use of chemical component	Yes	Yes (Low Amount)	No
Chances of developing rash	Yes	No	No
Chances of infection	Yes	May be	May be
Chances of cervical & ovarian cancer	Yes	Yes	No
Toxic Shock Syndrome	No	Yes	No
Environment friendly	No	No	Yes
Cost	Cheaper	Cheaper	Costly

How to Choose a Menstrual Hygiene Product?

The following points can be kept in mind for selection of menstrual hygiene product:

- If you are going to indulge in any physical activity such as swimming or exercising, pads may not be the most comfortable choice. Consider using a tampon or a cup based on how comfortable you feel.
- If flow is heavy, you may want to consider menstrual cups instead of using several pads as cups collect up to 30 ml of period blood.
- If you are travelling and will not be able to change easily, a tampon or a menstrual cup may serve you better than pads.
- If you are already suffering from an infection like vaginismus, inserting a cup or tampon may be difficult, or painful. In such a case, pads may be better.
- A lot of women in India feel that menstrual cups are too expensive. However, cups are cheaper as it can be used for 6-10 months. But, if you prefer spending money in small bursts instead of a larger amount at once, pads and tampons may be your choice.

Conclusion:

It is very difficult to maintain menstrual hygiene in this busy scheduled life for a woman. Menstrual cup provides ease, makes the woman relaxed, without disturbing to day care activities & creating no harm. It is available in reusable & disposable form. It makes the menstruation period comfortable to woman & also the environment safe & healthy.

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