



SESSION 2

Managing Periods - Period Products

Stuff you'll need!

- Presentation slides
- Period Products
- Pens
- Question box
- A space big enough to be active (if you can)
- Access to a screen to watch videos

Aims of session

- To identify different period products
- To increase understanding of period products use
- To increase awareness of factors affecting period product choice



This session is the **second** of four student-centred lessons. Each lesson includes active learning activities to support teacher-led components. The following symbols are used throughout the lesson plan to help you navigate:



Pupil Activities

These are only ideas! We have provided options depending on the space and resources you may have available.



Teacher-Led Sections

PowerPoint slides accompany this lesson plan.



Videos



Notes worth highlighting to the class

These are additional notes that you may want to highlight that are not included in the PowerPoint slides.



Optional Activity

Depending on space and time.

Introduction

There are two main sections to this session:

1. Common period products
2. Making period product choices

Section 1: Common Period Products



To begin, explain to the class that this session is focused on period products, also called menstrual products and outline the aims of the session above (also on **slide 2**). Also explain that when we refer to female (or girls if it's referencing published work) throughout the lessons, then we are referring to those that are assigned female at birth.



Some people use the terms "**sanitary**" (e.g. sanitary towels, sanitary protection) or "feminine hygiene" products for menstrual products, but we are moving away from these terms as they can imply that periods are not clean and that the products are cleaner than our bodies. Additionally, not everyone who menstruates identifies as feminine.



Slide 3 briefly provides an introduction to the topic of period products, how they are worn and introduces disposable and reusable products.



Activity 1: What do you know about period products and how do you use them?

This activity will involve setting up period product 'stations' around the room. Ideally, you will have access to various period products (e.g. disposable pads, tampons, menstrual cups, reusable pads, period pants and period swimwear) and have different sizes and absorbencies of products. You can often request reusable products by companies that sell them if they are being used for educational purposes.

If you do not have access to all of the different period products, then you can print out the images at the end of this lesson plan.

There are two questions for students to answer '*What do you know about the period products displayed?*' and '*How do you use period products?*' (also slide 5). Assign pupils to a period product. If you have products available, give pupils the opportunity to unwrap the products. You could even get them to stick the pad down onto pretend underwear to ensure they know how to use them. Allow pupils to rotate around each station whilst they answer the two questions for each period product.

You may need to prompt pupils to think of about how the products collect blood, how we dispose or clean the product and hygiene considerations.



Collate pupil responses in order to gauge their level of understanding. They could submit their responses as they complete each station, or they could verbally feedback to the class.



Reiterate that there are various products on offer and there may be a bit of trial and error in finding the products that suit a person best and what is comfortable for different activities.



Slides 6 - 14 have information and video links about the different products available and how to use these products if needed.



Slide 7 contains a short overview video produced by the NHS on disposable pads, tampons and menstrual cups and how to use them (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_XeQqIX8gk). This video uses the term sanitary pads. Remind pupils this is a term that we are now avoiding.



Slide 9 contains a short video produced by Girlology on how to insert a tampon with an applicator (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnGITvOKBXY>). Girls often want to know how to insert a tampon as they can find it daunting, especially if they have not long started their periods.



There are two different types of tampons: with and without an applicator. An applicator helps guide the tampon in place, whilst a non-applicator tampon uses fingers to insert the tampon in the vagina. Both types have a string at the other end which is used to gently pull the tampon out when needed.

Adolescent females have asked whether you need to take tampons out when urinating. Ensure they know that urine comes out of a small tube called the urethra, whilst a period comes out the vagina which is a different 'tube'.



Slide 10 and 11 outlines further important information about tampons and introduces the rare but serious Toxic Shock Syndrome.



Slide 12 contains a short video produced by Saalt (a company that sells menstrual cups) on how to insert a menstrual cup (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5KCYXDddzc>) along with some hygiene instructions.



DID YOU KNOW? Menstrual cups have been around since the 1930s!

It's recommended to empty a menstrual cup every 4-8 hours but companies often say they can be used for longer. It holds more blood and fluid than most other products so emptying is less frequent on heavier days.



Slide 13 and 14 provides information about reusable period pads, pants, swimwear and activewear



Period swimwear can be bikini bottoms or swimming costumes. Retailers often say they work for light/medium flow, with additional products needed (e.g. tampon, menstrual cup) during heavy flow.

Period activewear are usually leggings and shorts. Retailers often say these are good to absorb leaks. These are fairly new products that can be bought from a range of well-known sportswear brands. [An article by Cosmopolitan](#) outlines a number of different options if your class are interested in knowing more.

Section 2. Making period product choices

The products a person chooses can be based on a number of factors. The following activities will focus on period product choice.



Activity 2: What to expect and what's normal

Slide 16 outlines the following question ‘*What are the factors to consider before choosing period products?*’ along with three ‘case studies’. In groups, ask pupils to select a case study character (or assign a case study) and invite them to help the character make a choice about what product to use and explain why this is a good choice.

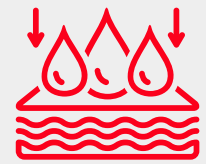
Slide 17 has prompts around different considerations. There are additional notes below that might help to guide the pupils in their decisions.



You may also prompt them by thinking about the pros and cons for the period product.

Availability – All pupils should have access to free period products at school. **Slide 18** outlines this.

Absorbency (how much blood it can hold) – blood loss during a period will vary from individual to individual and throughout a period. If you can, show the different absorbencies to pupils. Different brands of disposable products (e.g. pads/ tampons) will use different colours for different absorbencies.



How long you can wear them for before changing – some period products can be worn for longer than others



Ease of use - Some products such as menstrual cups and tampons may take a little bit of practice before people are comfortable inserting them and feel comfortable wearing them.

Comfort – comfort will be very subjective.

Financial cost – this can be short and long-term cost. Reusable products tend to be initially more expensive, whilst disposable products tend to be cheaper in the short-term, but more accumulatively over the years. Each period can cost on ~£10, £130 per year and a total of £4940 during menstruating years.



Environmental impact – many products (especially disposable products) use a lot of plastic in production. Products also end up in our water systems and in the sea.



Products should also never be flushed down the toilet. Reemphasise that bins should always be used. [City to Sea](#) and [Wen](#) highlight the environmental costs of period products.

Ingredients or materials the product is made from – [City to Sea](#) has a [good poster on this](#)

Suitability for activities – as noted previously, this will very much be subjective and will be a result of preference, unless doing water sport activities where tampons, menstrual cups and period swimwear are recommended.



Family tradition of using a certain type of product – often menstruating people are initially given the period products their mum or other family members use.

Religious reasons – some religions do not condone menstruators from using tampons or menstrual cups.

+ Extension activity and tasks : menstrual disorders

They may wish to evaluate the pros and cons of different products based on those outlined in **slides 20 to 26**, or produce posters with the pros and cons of each product.

Or depending on time, give pupils flip chart paper (or similar) and get them to write as many pros and cons in a certain time. To make it more active and competitive, you could have the flip chart paper on the wall and have a relay race where members of the group take turns as a relay race to run up and write down one pro/con for products within a certain amount of time.

Question Box



Add a question box during and after the lesson so pupils have an anonymous safe space to ask questions or highlight concerns that they may otherwise find embarrassing, uncomfortable or lack the vocabulary to express. Ensure you follow-up with the answers and set expectations around timelines. Answering pupil questions could be a good way to start the next lesson in this block.

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