



Menstrual Products in Schools

**A Toolkit for Minnesota K-12
Public Schools**

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Acknowledgements:

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Individual Partners

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& Many More!

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Minnesota Menstrual Equity Coalition
California Menstrual Equity Coalition

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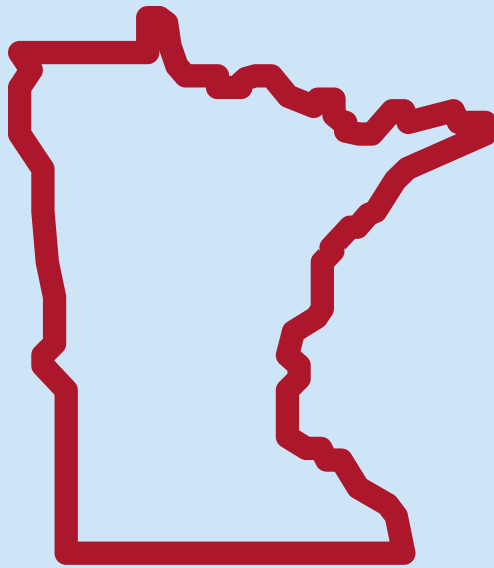
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Toolkit Printable
Resources Drive



Welcome & Background



Welcome

Dear Reader,

When you give students a voice they will tell you what they need. Student-led initiatives ignited the movement towards free menstrual products in Minnesota public schools. We, Kara Cowell and Mary Kenny, are both Masters in Public Health students in Maternal and Child Health at the University of Minnesota. Kara organized and testified as a college student during the 2023 legislation and Mary wrote her undergraduate thesis around advancing menstrual equity in schools. Together, we recognize and appreciate the possibilities that the Access to Menstrual Products Statute (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]) now provides for students across the state: access, dignity, and the ability to fully participate in their education.

Of course, passing legislation is only the first step. Implementation is often the hardest part, but as we connected with districts across the state, we saw a strong willingness to respond and a clear desire for the resources to support current contextual needs in school environments. That's where this toolkit comes in. The Minnesota Menstrual Products in Schools Toolkit arose from our collective passion to support schools and educators with practical guidance around menstruation that can be tailored to the individual needs of their communities. We chose to write this Toolkit as our Master's of Public Health applied practice project, but we knew that this work requires collective action and informed lived experiences.

As such, this Toolkit centers Minnesota voices — community organizations, facilities staff members, nurses, teachers, students, and more who all stand behind this legislation and know that it has the power to support students and enhance student outcomes. This project would not be possible without their guidance, support, feedback, and storytelling based on lived experiences and current community contexts. As life long learners, menstruators, and Minnesota residents, we are honored and privileged to be a part of this work.

Whether you are a teacher, school nurse, administrator, parent, or student, this toolkit is for you. We hope it supports your efforts to advance menstrual equity and foster learning environments where every student can show up with dignity and confidence.

In solidarity,
Kara Cowell & Mary Kenny
Menstrual Equity Advocates,
MPH Students & Toolkit Authors



Community Informed & Community Centered

Though this toolkit primarily aims to directly support schools and school staff, it applies directly to Minnesota students and communities. Community voices are sprinkled throughout this toolkit - spanning from a collection of 56 individual partner meetings, analysis of 258 survey responses, and 15 school staff interviews. Each interaction informed these resources. Please note that each speaker chose their own identifier for the purpose of this toolkit; hence, identifier format varies across speaker quotes.

“We ensure that students have toilet paper, paper towels, soap and Band-Aids, and we should ensure that students have period products as well.”

~Sandra Feist,
MN State Representative

“It’s creating a culture of respect, a culture where people are more accepting of [the] basic bodily functions that go into reproductive health, and everything that entails respect, consent and well-being of all kinds.”

~Erica Solomon Collins
Former Executive Director, NCJW Minnesota

“Minnesota’s law recognizes the needs of menstruators within our classrooms. This toolkit provides students with the tools necessary to be educated and involved in implementation of menstrual equity in our schools.”

~Violet Ditlevson,
Youth Advocate & Student Toolkit Trainee

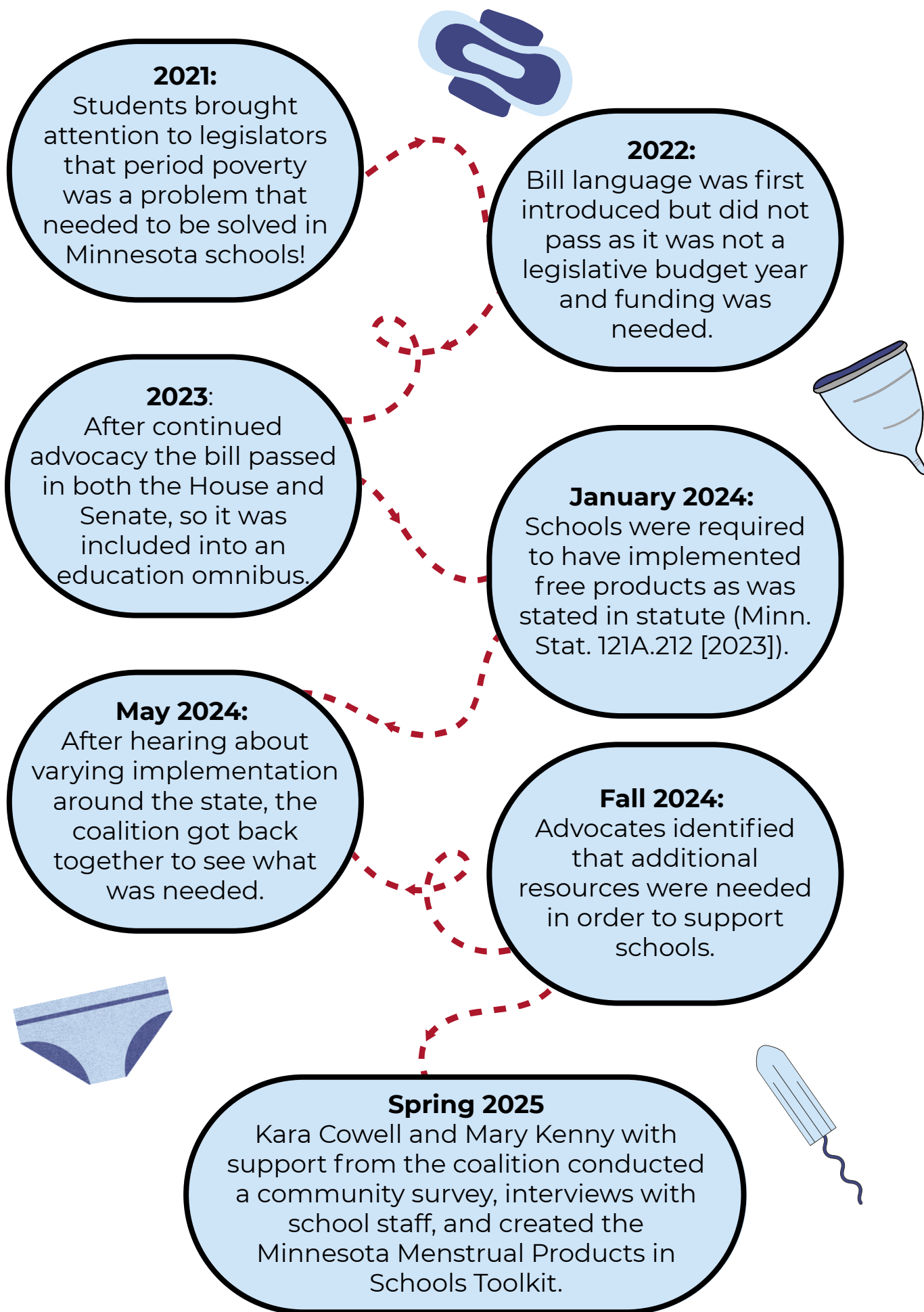
“I was committed to the passage of this legislation from ideation to its final language to public advocacy because I knew what was at stake for many young students – our educations, our futures. Now, this toolkit is how we ensure that every school can carry out the law with intention, so no student in Minnesota is left without the dignity and access they deserve.”

~Elif Ozturk,
Youth Advocate & Co-Creator of the Minnesota Menstrual Equity Law

“This bill was never part of a political agenda, it was to make students feel safe. Part of making sure they are safe and comfortable in their learning environment is ensuring that they are given the dignity of being in control of their own personal hygiene.”

~Maarit Mattson

Minnesota History




Why A Toolkit?

This Toolkit aims to support school staff, students, and parents with a collection of resources that promotes menstrual health. Menstruation is a healthy body function, but the subject still holds stigma. *Research shows that nearly 1 in 4 students struggle to access menstrual products and have missed class because they lack access to menstrual products*¹. In 2023, Minnesota passed legislation requiring all public schools to provide free menstrual products in bathrooms used by students. With stigma and lack of access to products, Minnesota sought to eliminate barriers for students through providing free products in bathrooms.

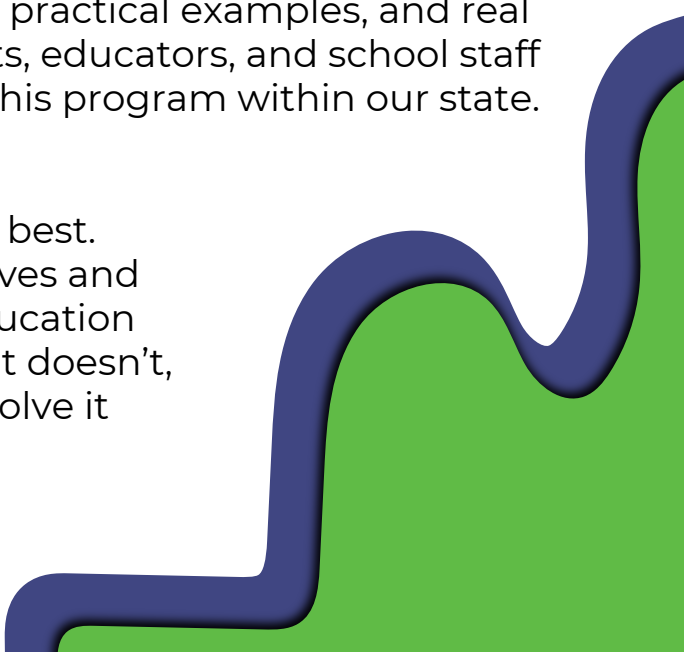
During the initial rollout of the menstrual products in schools legislation in January of 2024, the Minnesota Menstrual Equity Coalition (many of whose members contributed to advocacy around the 2023 legislation) heard that schools were looking for best-practice approaches to streamline the new process.

New initiatives spark questions from students and position teachers or school staff to be the ones to answer them on top of all their other responsibilities. Instead of expecting them to build, recreate, and deliver menstrual health content each year, we decided to create a Toolkit that educators can pull from to find information all in one place.

A large, abstract, organic shape in shades of red and pink, resembling a stylized flower or a splash, located on the left side of the page.

California, Oregon, and Massachusetts have Toolkits which similarly offers guidance to reduce stigma and support student dignity surrounding menstruation.

California Toolkit authors kindly shared materials and parts of their Toolkit with the Minnesota writers. We appreciate their leadership, commitment, and support behind this work. This Minnesota Toolkit centers local voices, practical examples, and real feedback from students, educators, and school staff working with this program within our state.

A large, abstract, organic shape in shades of green and blue, resembling a stylized hill or a splash, located on the bottom right side of the page.

Schools know their individual communities best. This Toolkit highlights a variety of perspectives and approaches to menstrual equity work in education settings. Please take what works, leave what doesn't, and let us know how we can continue to evolve it as needs grow and change.

Menstrual Products In Schools Legislation

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Policy Overview



What is the Access to Menstrual Products Statute?

2023 CHAPTER 55 H.F.No. 2497 ARTICLE 1 GENERAL EDUCATION:
Section 1: 121A.212: ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS.

Minnesota Statutes 2023, section 121A.212 Access to Menstrual Products was enacted as part of the 2023 education legislation and effective January 1, 2024:

Statutory Text:²⁴

"A school district or charter school must provide students with access to menstrual products at no charge. The products must be available to all menstruating students in restrooms regularly used by students in grades 4 to 12 according to a plan developed by the school district. For purposes of this section, 'menstrual products' means pads, tampons, or other similar products used in connection with the menstrual cycle."

Key Legal Requirements

1. Mandatory Provision

- All Minnesota public school districts and charter schools are required to provide menstrual products at no cost to students.

2. Product Accessibility

- These products must be readily available in restrooms that are regularly used by students in grades 4-12.

3. Implementation Plan

- Each school district must develop its own plan to implement this requirement, allowing for flexibility to accommodate local needs and facilities.

4. Definition of Menstrual Products

- The statute's definition of "menstrual products" includes pads, tampons, or other similar products used in connection with the menstrual cycle.

CITATION:
24. (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023])



When did the Access to Menstrual Products Statute go into effect?



The law took effect on January 1, 2024.²⁴

To which schools does the Access to Menstrual Products Statute apply?



All Minnesota public school districts and charter schools serving students in grades 4-12.

Why is the Access to Menstrual Products Statute necessary?

Students across Minnesota worked together with legislators to advocate for this law to combat period poverty at school. Implementation of this statute (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]) equips students with the support and tools that they need while menstruating during the school day. Multiple community organizations, educators, parents, and policymakers advocated for this law because more than 25% of students do not have regular access to menstrual products.¹

Access to menstrual products empowers students to focus on learning, keeps them in the classroom, and shows them that they don't have to be limited by a biological process they cannot control. Furthermore, providing menstrual products encourages and normalizes conversation, while actively dismantling the harmful stigma surrounding menstruation. Investing in menstrual equity not only benefits individual students but also strengthens Minnesota communities. **When students can participate fully in their education, they are better equipped to succeed, breaking cycles of poverty and inequality.** Equitable access to menstrual products creates more dignity, opportunity, and the fundamental right for students to thrive in community spaces.

Toilet paper isn't considered a luxury in public bathrooms, and menstrual products shouldn't be either. Students voices were clear in this: they cannot learn while they are bleeding if there is no support at school. Gratitude for this statute (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]) and its impact on student wellbeing was one of the most common responses to our spring 2025 survey – so it's crucial we keep working towards full implementation and improved access for generations to come.

CITATIONS:

1. PERIOD (2023)

24. Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]

25. California Health Education. (2024)

26. Oregon Department of Education. (2022)

27. Massachusetts Menstrual Equity Coalition. (2024)

“As an teacher, I no longer have to buy products for students who do not have any. This program has given students dignity and privacy, as they do not have to share a private matter or ask for supplies when they don't have them or cannot afford them rather than being deprived of a basic necessity.”

~Minnesota Teacher

Which school personnel are responsible for implementing the Access to Menstrual Products Statute and how do they implement it?

Local Control: Each school district is responsible for developing its own implementation plan; the law respects local governance while setting a statewide standard for access.

Compliance Considerations: Schools must ensure compliance with this statute (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]) by assessing restroom facilities, budgeting allocated funds for product procurement, and establishing maintenance routines to keep products stocked.

What if my local educational agency is failing to comply with the Access to Menstrual Products Statute?



If there aren't menstrual products being provided in your school, there are a few steps you can take to advocate and help your school support the basic needs of students in your community.

Remember this is a legal requirement, not a suggestion. If products are not available in accessible restrooms for students in grades 4–12, the school is out of compliance with state law.²⁴

1. Document the Issue

- Note the schools affected, restrooms without products, and dates or incidents.
- Take photos (if appropriate) and collect written communications about lack of products from staff or students.

2. Connect with Trusted Adults or Contact School Administration

- Reach out to the school principal or building administrator.
- Ask for a copy of their compliance plan for Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023].
- Express your concerns respectfully and in writing when possible.

3. Speak at a School Board Meeting

- Bring your concern directly to a public forum.
- Use facts, cite the statute (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]), and share student perspectives when possible.

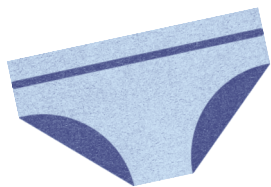
4. Elevate to the District Level

- If the issue persists, contact the district superintendent or the district's equity or operations office.

5. Contact your local and state elected officials

- Find out who represents you in the state legislature at <https://www.gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/>. Reach out to your MN House and MN Senate representatives. You can also find and contact your local city council, mayor, or other elected officials.

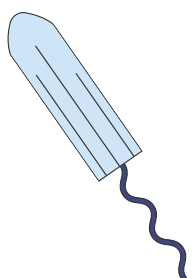
Minnesota has other laws related to menstrual products too!



- Colleges and Universities: Minn. Stat. 135A.1365 (2024)²⁸
 - “The Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities shall, and the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota is requested to, provide students with access to menstrual products at no charge. The products must be available in restrooms used by students. For purposes of this section, “menstrual products” means pads, tampons, or other similar products used in connection with the menstrual cycle.”



- Prisons: Minn. Stat. 241.021 (2021)²⁹
 - “Feminine hygiene products, including at a minimum sanitary napkins and tampons, shall be provided at no cost to individuals housed in state correctional facilities used for the general confinement of female inmates. The commissioner of corrections shall develop a written policy to implement a process whereby a reasonable number of feminine hygiene products are available to female inmates.”



- No Tampon Tax: Minn. Stat. 297A.67, subd. 17 (Updated 2017).³⁰
 - In 1981, Minnesota exempted all health products from state sales tax. They became the first state to end the tampon tax.
 - “Feminine hygiene products are exempt from sales tax.”
 - Examples include: tampons, sanitary napkins, panty liners, but exclude feminine sprays and cleansing products, such as douches and wipes, which are taxable.



- Chemical Safety: Minn. Stat. 116.943 (2021)³¹
 - Subd. 5. “Prohibitions. (a) Beginning January 1, 2025, a person may not sell, offer for sale, or distribute for sale in this state the following products if the product contains intentionally added PFAS- (8) Menstruation Products.”

CITATIONS:

28. Minn. Stat. 135A.1365 (2024)

29. Minn. Stat. 241.021 (2021)

30. Minn. Stat. 297A.67, subd. 17 (Updated 2017).

31. Minn. Stat. 116.943 (2021)

Implementation Support



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How to Supply Menstrual Products in School Bathrooms

The California Menstrual Equity Coalition created and shared much of the content found on the next six pages directly from the CA Menstrual Equity for All Toolkit. Special thanks to the entire California Menstrual Equity Coalition for their work and permission to use these pages to support menstrual product implementation in Minnesota.²⁵


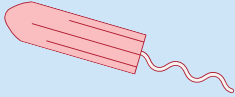
This section summarizes some considerations for schools as they work to incorporate free menstrual products into school bathrooms. These components include information on what types of menstrual products to provide, what quantity of products to order, how to store and dispose of products, and how to make products accessible to all who need them.

It is strongly encouraged that students have an opportunity to weigh in on the types, quality, and storage of products to make them most accessible.

Types of Products



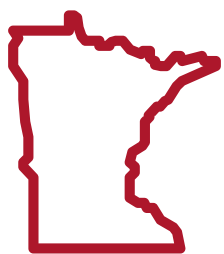
Minnesota schools are required to provide **menstrual products** defined in statute (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]) as meaning pads, tampons, or other similar products used in connection with the menstrual cycle. Each school can choose which products fit the needs of their students best.

Product	Definition	Types	Sizes	Examples
Pad	A disposable menstrual product that adheres to underwear and absorbs menstrual fluids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liners • Day Pads • Night Pads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light • Regular • Heavy 	 <p>[a pad with red adhesive]</p>
Tampon	A disposable menstrual product that is inserted into the vagina to absorb menstrual fluids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic Applicator • Cardboard Applicator • No Applicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light • Regular • Super • Super Plus • Ultra 	 <p>[a tampon without an applicator]</p>

For a Q/A about product safety and ingredients, read the Tampon Safety Sheet.


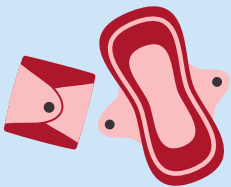

B. Tampon Safety FAQ





Components to Consider:

Take the time to consider which products to provide in order to fit the needs of the students in each school and their stage of development, product preferences, and quality. Trends reflect that younger students opt for pads over tampons.

Product	Definition	Types	Sizes	Examples
Washable Period Underwear	Specific underwear that collects menstrual fluids and can be washed, dried, and reused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-waisted • Bikini • Boxer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light • Heavy • Sleeper • XS - 6X 	 <p>[red washable period underwear]</p>
Reusable Pads	Reusable pads are made from washable cloth, attach to underwear to absorb menstrual fluids, and can be reused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cotton • Bamboo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liners • Day Pads • Night Pads 	 <p>[a pink and red reusable pad]</p>
Menstrual Cups	A menstrual cup is a flexible cup that is inserted into the vagina to collect menstrual fluids. The cup can be washed and reused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tulip-shaped • Disc-shaped 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different brands have different size charts 	 <p>[a pink and red menstrual cup]</p>

Schools can **go above and beyond** to support the menstrual health of students by providing any of the products listed above.

“I know a couple kids in my class who use them [school provided free menstrual products]...Their family and economic situation doesn't provide for stable accessibility to it [menstrual products] at home... I know that kids use it.”

~5th Grade Teacher

Quantity

Considerations:

1. Disposable pads and tampons need to be changed at least every **4–8 hours**.
2. Days with heavier menstrual flow will require menstrual products to be **changed more often** and may require larger sized products.
3. The average person who menstruates begins a new menstrual cycle **every 21–40 days**.
4. The average menstrual period lasts **2–7 days**.

Estimated Usage Per Student, Per Month*:



Students	Min. Daily Products	Max. Daily Products	Monthly Range	Yearly Range
1	4	6	8-42	96-504
100	400	600	80-420	960–5,040
1,000	4,000	6,000	8,000-42,000	96,000–504,000
5,000	20,000	30,000	40,000-210,000	480,000–2,520,000

**Notes: Calculations should be made for each school in a district serving students in grades 4-12. The actual numbers may vary based on age groups within each school. Average number of products used per student per month was based on pilot programs conducted throughout California.*

Recommended Purchase Quantity Per Month**:

School Size	# of Period Products	School Size	# of Period Products
500 or less	4,500	5,000	45,000
1,000	9,000	10,000	90,000
2,500	22,500	15,000	135,000
4,000	36,000	30,000	270,000

**Assumptions:

- 50% of students at each school menstruate
- Average use of 3 products per student per month
- 180 days or 6 months in 1 school year



Storage

Considerations:

1. Menstrual products must be stored in a clean and dry place.
2. Not all menstrual products have the same shape and size.
3. Menstrual products must be accessible to all students, and some students may have different accessibility needs.



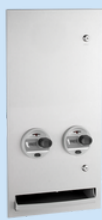

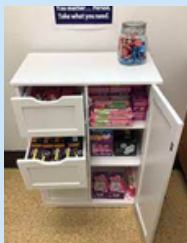
Type	Benefits	Drawbacks	Examples
Wall Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attaching the unit to the wall can prevent tampering. • School restrooms may already have wall dispensers in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some wall units only work with a specific type and brand of product. • Products may appear to be coin operated, so students may think they cost money. • Units can be expensive to install. • Students may have difficulty getting more than one product at a time when needed. 	<p>a.</p>  <p>[silver wall unit with two dispensing knobs and a slot for the free product]</p>
Basket on Counter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low cost. • Students can easily take the products they need. • Not much space required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easy to remove or tamper with the menstrual products. 	<p>b.</p>  <p>[wicker basket containing yellow and blue tampons and pads]</p>
Storage Drawer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less expensive than a wall unit. • Can hold a large amount of product at one time. • Students can easily take the products they need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easier to remove or tamper with the menstrual products. 	<p>c.</p>  <p>[white table with drawers full menstrual products]</p>

PHOTO CITATIONS:

a. Derived from Bobrick Washroom Equipment (2022). *This toolkit does not endorse any specific brands or products.*



b. Jacob Hamilton (2022) [The Oregonian / Oregon Live](#)

c. Oregon Department of Education (2022), [Menstrual Dignity for Students Toolkit](#)

Disposal

Considerations:

1. Disposable pads and tampons cannot be flushed down the toilet.
2. Disposable pads and tampons must be placed in a trash receptacle.
3. Trash receptacles should be available and clearly marked in all bathrooms.

Materials	Why They are Necessary	Examples
Trash Receptacle	Each stall should have its own trash receptacle to maintain student privacy and make it easy to properly dispose of menstrual products.	 [silver trash receptacle box]
Receptacle Liners	Liners go inside each trash receptacle for easy and sanitary removal of the trash contents. Lining each receptacle is also an easy way to keep the receptacle clean.	 [brown liner bag]

Words Matter

The words we use to describe menstruation, menstrual products, and people who experience menstruation can have a big impact on students. Using gender inclusive language and language that discusses menstruation as a natural occurrence helps create a more welcoming learning environment and helps de-stigmatize menstruation for all students.

For example:

Instead of...	Say...
Menstrual hygiene	Menstrual health
Girls	Students; teens; girls and gender diverse students; people who menstruate
Feminine hygiene products	Menstrual products

Accessibility

Accessibility considerations for local educational agencies:

- **Menstruation is not just a topic for girls and young women.** This legislation applies to gender expansive youth and all 4th-12th grade students who menstruate. The content from this toolkit supports all students' understanding of menstruation, regardless of if they menstruate (yet or ever). When products are available in all bathrooms (women's, men's, and all-gender restrooms) there are more opportunities for menstruators to access the products that they need. This law extends to include menstruators such as transgender men, nonbinary people, and intersex and other gender-diverse people who may not use girls' restrooms.
- **Support students with diverse abilities.** Be sure to store products at a height that students can reach. Beyond this, be sure to store dispensers or product containers in places that students in wheelchairs can access. The ADA has specific rules for what they call "forward reach" that can be consulted for reference. Students with personal care attendants should be able to enter and exit stalls with their products. If possible, include braille signs to describe available products.
- **Meet students where they are.** Some students may prefer to keep their period and period product needs private, given that associations around menstrual products could lead to assumptions about their gender identity or socioeconomic status at home. Additionally, given a variety of cultural considerations and family customs, students may prefer to be discrete when selecting period products. Some Minnesota schools store products in plastic containers in individual stalls. Other schools provide products in a common area or near handwashing stations. Either option supports students in creating accessible pathways to products.
- **Educator tip:** Add signage to the bathrooms explaining what period products are and why they are available. See the appendix and the resource google drive for downloadable and customizable bathroom sign options, broken down by education level.

*This section is modeled after the CA Toolkit

CITATION:
25. California Health Education. (2024).

“We have students who are in their wheelchair . . . Usually [students] just go in and you can just walk past, and you [can grab products]... but we kind of lowered it [free period product containers] so that while they're in the wheelchair, they don't have to get up, or they don't have to extend too far [to reach products]. So we lower that, you know, so that they can have the access.”

~ Constance Robinson, St. Louis Park Schools

Funding & Local Control

This program is allocated specific state funding to support purchasing of products for provision in student facing bathrooms.

- How a school determines which bathrooms are regularly used by students, and how they provide products in these bathrooms is up to local control.
- Each school district should have a plan in place about how they will purchase and provide products.
- Students have shared that their biggest concerns are product quality and that the products do not get restocked.
- Ideally stocking menstrual products should be a similar task to restocking toilet paper and paper towels in all school bathrooms by facilities or other support staff.

What is Required by Law - Local Control →

The State of Minnesota calculates the amount of funding schools get each year as \$2 times the number of enrolled students.

A school that is unsure if they have received their funding should contact their district administration as all funding was disbursed starting in 2023 for implementation by 2024. This funding is and will be maintained as a base unless directly changed by the state legislature.

We also know that schools identified needs for additional funding and financial support for dispenser related technology. While these additional costs are not directly included in the funding available from the state at this time, we encourage districts to contact their state legislators to advocate for additional funding. Additionally, we heard that some districts have found success in talking to and collaborating with neighbor districts to find what is most affordable, successful, or what additional funding resources may be available for their area.

“I think it's important for the kids to have access, and I don't know how the decisions are made to keep the funding or not, but I think it's important to keep the funding for this because it really does make a difference in those kids who need that difference.”

~5th grade teacher

What Has Worked in Other Minnesota Schools – Case Example

Free Menstrual Product Implementation: A Journey Toward Equity at St. Louis Park Schools

**Narrative from Dr. Constance Robinson,
Executive Director of Student Services for St. Louis Park Schools**

“At St. Louis Park Schools, I often say our work spans from birth to Earth. We serve students from birth through age 22—and community education partners with senior programs and care and treatment facilities,” explained Dr. Constance Robinson when describing the district's comprehensive support model.

When Dr. Robinson began her tenure in July of 2024, she was quickly made aware of Minnesota's 2023 legislative mandate requiring free menstrual products in school restrooms for students in grades 4 through 12. “It was simple for me,” she shared. “Of course we’re going to comply with this law but more importantly, we’re going to use it as an opportunity to educate and support our students.”

Initial implementation came with challenges. “There was pushback, largely because people didn’t understand the ‘how’ or the ‘why,’” Dr. Robinson explained. “Some asked, ‘Why put products in the boys’ bathrooms?’ My answer: because boys should also understand menstruation. We’re committed to equity, and that means inclusion in every space: girls,’ boys,’ and non-binary bathrooms.”

To launch the effort, Dr. Robinson prioritized training for principals and school nurses, ensuring that staff could support and educate students effectively. Community outreach was also a priority. “Families needed to understand the purpose and value of this initiative so they could reinforce it at home.”

Free Menstrual Product Implementation: A Journey Toward Equity at St. Louis Park Schools (Continued)

Dr. Robinson collaborated closely with the district's Director of Facilities. "At first, he hesitated. But once we aligned around the mandate and the developmental needs of our students, we moved forward in partnership," she recalled. "It's not just about compliance it's about teaching a life skill."

The first months brought student reactions ranging from curiosity to resistance. "Some kids threw products," Dr. Robinson noted. "That's normal curiosity. We addressed it with education not punishment explaining the purpose and importance of respect."

As the year progressed, implementation deepened. "By November, only two elementary schools weren't fully integrating the practice. We realized inconsistent training was sending mixed messages. We had to reset."

Throughout the year, Dr. Robinson continued listening to students, families, and staff. "Students were asking for products. Staff saw the need. The community expected us to deliver. We held space for those conversations, even with staff who initially said, 'This isn't our issue.' I reminded them, 'This is about the kids. We have jobs because of them.'"

By May, all district schools had implemented access to menstrual products across restrooms. "Every site is now equipped with products - high school, middle school, elementaries, our transition program, ECSE, and care and treatment. Where needed, we adapted installations to ensure accessibility, placing dispensers outside stalls when space was tight. We've made it happen."

Dr. Robinson recognizes this work is ongoing. "It's a new muscle, and we'll need to reset and reteach every year. But I'm proud. We've done something powerful for our students."

Menstrual Products in Schools Toolkit (MPST) Steps for Success Implementation Checklist

Educator Tip:

Working through this checklist normalizes the topic of menstrual products in bathrooms and sets a standard for students to expect!

- ☐ **Schedule a meeting with fellow school staff** to discuss what the legislation means and what this looks like in the school community.
- ☐ **Designate a staff member** to coordinate ordering, stocking, and supplying menstrual products for all school bathrooms.
- ☐ **Hang relevant bathroom signs in bathrooms**, encouraging students to respect the menstrual products. Stock the bathrooms with products accordingly.
- ☐ **Make an announcement to students at the beginning of the year** about the policy, and allow students to ask questions about it. If you do not know the answer right away, feel free to write them down, go find answers, and have a follow up the following week.
- ☐ **Continue to educate students** on menstruation where it fits best into classroom curriculum. Find time to follow up on product respect and responsibility as needed or if issues arise.
- ☐ **Encourage peer to peer leadership.** Nominate a student advocate, student council, or student group who can help alert staff to issues and inform other students why this matters for the school community every so often. This promotes leadership and encourages student involvement.
- ☐ **Consult this toolkit** as needed for education, printable signs, or additional support.

Other Partnerships & Support

Building a sustainable and supportive menstrual equity program requires more than just in-school implementation. It benefits from strong community relationships, external resources, and long-term investment. This section outlines ways to expand your reach and strengthen your efforts through strategic partnerships and support.

Building Community Support

Menstrual equity flourishes when the broader community is engaged. Consider the following ways to bring others into your efforts:

- Connect with local organizations such as health departments, nonprofits, youth centers, public libraries, and mutual aid groups that may offer resources, volunteers, or programming.
- Host informational sessions for families, caregivers, and community members to normalize menstrual health conversations and reduce stigma.
- Engage students in co-leading or advising on programming—student voices are central to success and sustainability.

Grants & Donations

- If additional resources are needed to help sustain this program, reach out to your local state senator and representative to see if they can help or advocate for additional funding! In the meantime, some schools have been able to receive grants from foundations that focus on student basic needs, health, education, or equity.
- Partner with local businesses or civic groups (e.g., Rotary Clubs, women's associations) who may want to donate products or funds.

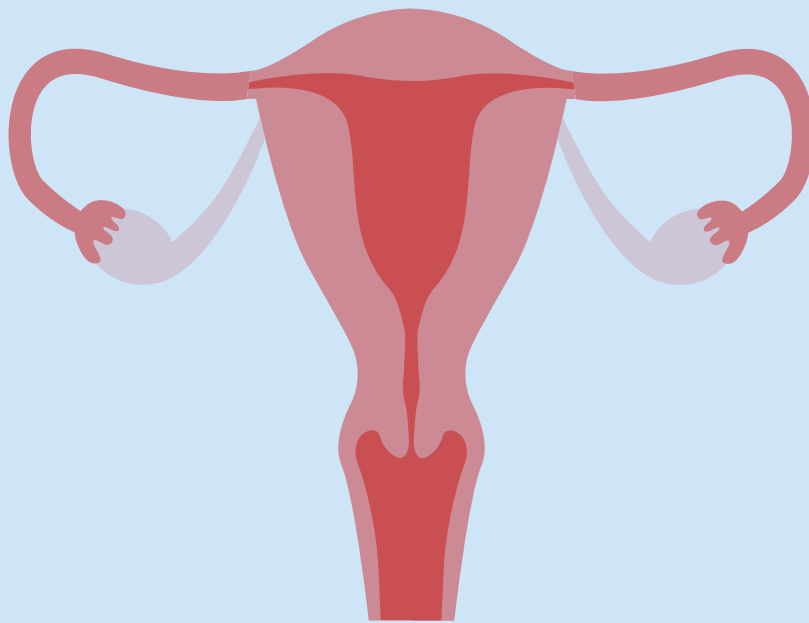
Additional Advocacy

- Continue to tell your local school board, city council, and state legislators what support you might need and how this program is impacting your school community.
- Help further menstrual equity advocacy by talking to leaders in your community about providing free products in public buildings and other places in your area!

“We actually rolled it out. So that's where we saw the barriers, but we got the stakeholders to all engage in it. Now that we're in this space, what do we need to do to explore funding opportunities, not just for the products, right? It's also about the education piece, because we have families that are coming from different parts of the world who are joining us, and in their culture, it's not acceptable, [to talk about menstruation] but it's something we have to teach them. I want to make sure we continue this.”

~Constance Robinson, St. Louis Park

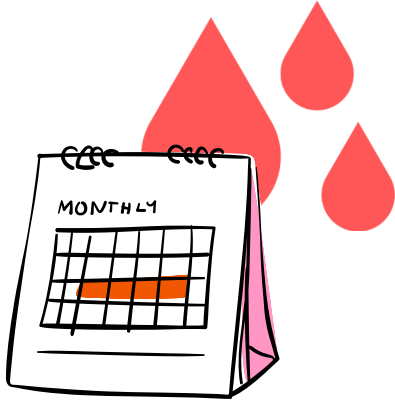
Menstrual Health 101



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What is a Period?



Menstruation (AKA “a period”) is the monthly shedding of the lining of the uterus.

Menstruation is also known by the terms “menses,” “menstrual period,” or the “menstrual cycle.”

Menstrual blood is partly blood and partly tissue from the inside of the uterus. During menstruation, menstrual blood flows from the uterus through the cervix and out of the body through the vagina.²

Puberty, Pain, & Hormones

Puberty

- Menarche (the start of menstruation) is a normal part of puberty for people with a uterus.
- Breast development usually starts 2 to 3 years before the first period and pubic hair development usually starts 1 to 2 years before the first period.⁴

Hormonal Changes by Age

- After first period (menarche), irregular cycles are normal as the brain and ovaries sync up. Most teens have a menstrual cycle that lasts between 21 and 45 days.⁶
- In late teen years and early adulthood, cycles begin to regulate closer to 21-35 days.⁵
- In perimenopause, hormones change again. Periods become less regular leading up to menopause.

Pain

Menstruation is often accompanied by cramps and other symptoms related to the changes happening with hormones in the body. That being said, painful periods can often be a sign of underlying reproductive health conditions that shouldn't be ignored.⁷ Adults should take student's pain seriously and encourage them to practice empathy, self care, and seek help when needed.

When Periods Feel Off: Common Conditions

- Dysmenorrhea: painful periods (cramps)⁸
- Amenorrhea: no period at all⁹
- Menorrhagia: very heavy bleeding¹⁰
- Metrorrhagia: bleeding between periods¹¹
- Premenstrual Disorders/ PMDD: mood, body, or energy changes before a period^{12,13}
- PCOS, Endometriosis, Fibroids and More¹⁴

Talk about what is and is not normal with menstruation. Heavy periods can sometimes be the first symptom of a bleeding disorder, so it's important for kids to let an adult know if they are worried about bleeding too much. Some conditions like endometriosis are hard to identify and diagnose. Treatments for pain, heavy bleeding, and other menstrual symptoms are available and should be discussed with a healthcare provider.

CITATIONS:

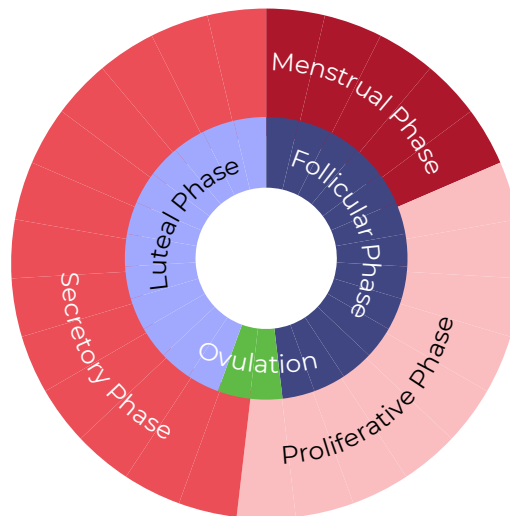
2. Cleveland Clinic. (2022)
4. Mayo Clinic. (2023)
5. Li, H., et al. (2023)
6. ACOG, (2024).
7. ACOG Committee, (2018)
8. ACOG, (2022)

9. ACOG, (2024)
10. American Academy of Family Physicians, (2007)
11. Cleveland Clinic, (2025)
12. ACOG, (2023)
13. Silver, (2024)
14. ACOG, (2023)

Understanding the Menstrual Cycle

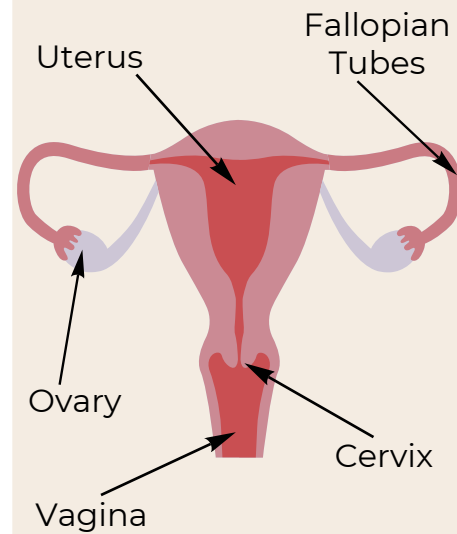
Did You Know...

The menstrual cycle consists of 2 cycles happening at the same time: one in the ovaries, and one in the uterus



The ovarian and uterine cycles involve hormones (including estrogen and progesterone) that regulate the entire menstrual cycle.

Reproductive System Basics



Blank & Answer Key Worksheet



Ovarian Cycle: What Happens in the Ovaries¹⁵

Follicular Phase (Days 1–14):

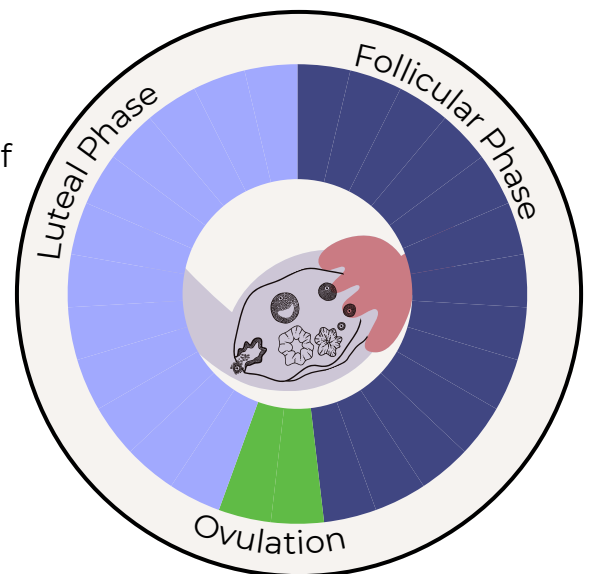
- Brain sends hormones to stimulate the growth of a follicle in the ovary, which contains an immature egg. Estrogen rises.

Ovulation (Around Day 14):

- A hormone surge causes the ovary to release the egg from the follicle.

Luteal Phase (Days 15–28):

- The leftover follicle (corpus luteum) makes progesterone to prep the uterus for potential fertilization. Unless an egg is fertilized, hormone levels drop to restart the cycle.



Uterine Cycle: What Happens in the Uterus¹⁶

Menstrual Phase (Days 1–5):

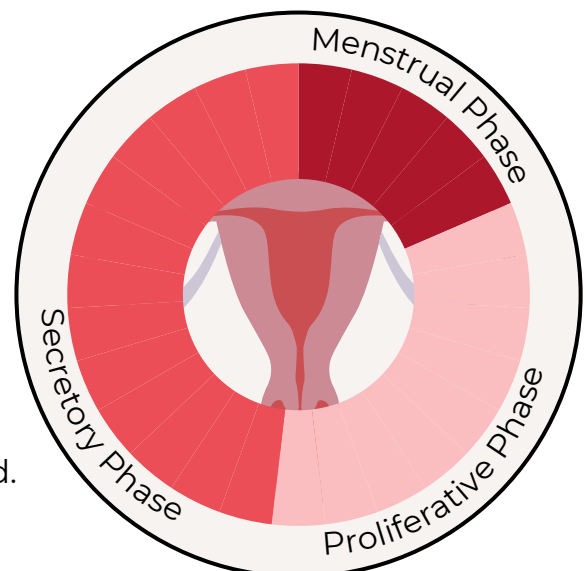
- Uterus sheds its lining through menstruation.

Proliferative Phase (Days 6–14):

- Estrogen helps rebuild the lining.

Secretory Phase (Days 15–28):

- Progesterone promotes uterine lining. Unless an egg is fertilized, the lining breaks down to be shed.



CITATIONS:




15. Dutta, D. C., & Konar, H. (2013)

16. Mihm, M., Gangooly, S., & Muttukrishna, S. (2011)

Menstrual Health Habits & Period Product Safety

Menstrual Health Habits

Menstruation is a normal healthy process, but it is important to change menstrual products often to avoid health issues. See this chart about different kinds of products.¹⁷

 Pad	Change every 4-8 hours
 Tampon	Change every 4-8 hours
 Menstrual Cup	Change every 10-12 hours ¹⁸



Navigation Tip: All images and external resources are clickable links and also included in the appendix

Safety

Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) is a rare but serious illness which is linked to wearing tampons for longer than 8 hours.²⁰ Symptoms include having flu-like symptoms, a rash, a fever, feeling dizzy and sick.²¹

Bacteria can cause health issues or odor with all period products if left in for too long, so make sure to change all products regularly.

"I heard that tampons have toxic metals in them and they could be bad for me?"

Right now there's no proof that tampons are unsafe. If you're worried, you can try brands that share their ingredients or use other options like menstrual cups or reusable pads.¹⁹

[Tampon Safety Research FAQ](#) →

Menstruation & Birth Control

Many types of birth control impact the menstrual cycle in some way. Choosing to use birth control whether for period symptom management or other reasons is a personal decision and one that someone should consult with their doctor and trusted adult about.³

[Birth Control Methods Chart: NRHTC](#) →

This resource includes potential period impacts for each available birth control method (please note that these often vary person to person).



What about the period I get while on the birth control pill? Is this different? Can I skip it?

Much like a regular menstrual period, withdrawal bleeding is caused by a drop in hormone levels in the body. If you continuously take the birth control pill without the placebo/ sugar pill week, hormones won't drop and no period occurs. A withdrawal bleed during the placebo week of the birth control pill is a historic holdover intended to mimic a more "natural" cycle and is not necessary for health.³

CITATIONS:

3. ACOG, (2022)

17. ACOG, (2023)

18. van Eijk, A., et. al., (2019)

19. Shearston, J. A, et. al., (2024)

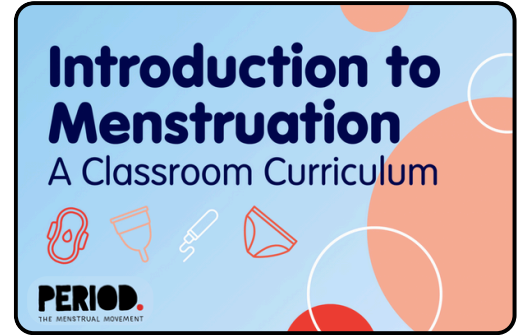
20. ACOG, (2023)

21. Ross A, Shoff HW., (Updated 2023)

Health Education Resources

Tips for Teaching

- Use inclusive language — not all people who menstruate are girls or women.
- Encourage questions, normalize curiosity, and offer anonymity for student comfort.
- Provide students with credible resources they can reference back to like videos online or other handouts.
- All students, whether they will menstruate or not, should learn about menstruation to support safe and supportive communities for menstruators.



Do you want to know how Menstrual Health fits into broader health standards and curriculum?

In accordance with Minnesota statutes, Minnesota is currently in the process of creating statewide Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards in Health⁴⁹.

While these standards are not explicitly required to include menstruation, it is an important part of health and puberty so educators could reference how to make it fit into existing health standards or reference those in other states like DC⁴⁷.

PERIOD. org
Education Materials →

Period Education UK
Lesson Plans & Slides →

DC Menstrual Health
Education Standards →

MN Health Education
& Standards Creation →

Check out some of these great external teaching resources



The Science Of Menstruation:

If you are an educator who didn't receive a lot of formal training on menstrual health education, you are not alone.

Check out this short video for a great summary and share it with others as a resource!



CITATIONS:

47. DC Menstrual Health Education Standards (2016)

49. Minn. Stat. 120B.021 (2024)

Cultural Relevance & Menstruation

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Cultural Relevance Related to Menstruation

Cultural understanding of menstruation in Minnesota is a critical aspect of public health and gender equity, particularly across culture and ethnicity. The social experiences surrounding menstruation (learning, language, and habits) vary based on cultural narratives and norms.

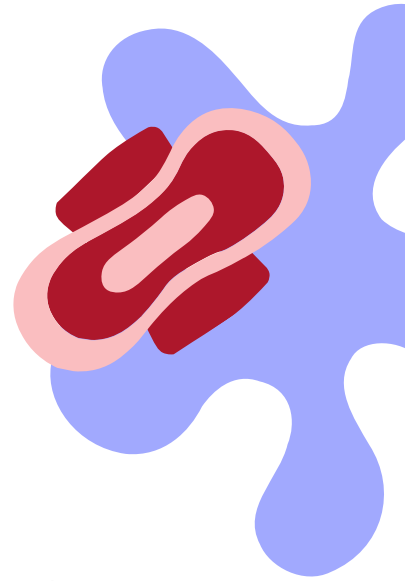
The intersection of culture and health education is key. Different ethnic groups may have varying beliefs and practices related to menstruation, which influence how individuals perceive and manage menstrual health. Understanding these culturally responsive nuances is essential for developing effective educational strategies that resonate with diverse populations. Failure to address these differences can perpetuate stigma and misinformation about menstruation, which prevents students from seeking the necessary support and resources. The following information provides cultural components to consider while supporting the menstruating students in your community.

Key Considerations

- Cultural and religious norms shape how menstruation is perceived, discussed, and managed. For example, in some religions/cultures, people avoid using tampons or menstrual cups. Try to provide both pads and tampons as options.
- Cultural practices for menstrual health hold pride and power. Avoid assumptions that all restrictions are oppressive - many practices reclaim important cultural nuance.
- Period stigma intersects with broader experiences of medical neglect and reproductive injustice that might lead to mistrust in healthcare products and systems.

Educational Priorities

- Create safe, judgment-free spaces for questions and include trusted community voices when possible. Ensure resources respect religious values while providing evidence-based information.
- Use bilingual or multilingual materials and community workshops to foster conversation. Center factual health education and empowerment to dismantle shame.



The communities featured on the next page were specifically requested by educators in Minnesota. We recognize that this is not an exhaustive list and that every community, including white and Black American culture, has distinct traditions and attitudes around menstruation. This toolkit is meant to be a starting point, recognizing that continued dialogue and culturally responsive work are essential to fully support the diverse experiences within our schools.

Community Features



33

Somali American Youth

- Somali menstruators may navigate layered challenges: cultural silence around menstruation, lack of accurate information, and other complex expectations.
- Consider gender norms, expectations around modesty, and religious considerations (e.g., cleanliness and spiritual purity during menstruation).

Translated Materials in  Somali, Hmong, & Spanish

Latinx Youth

- Cultural values such as respeto (respect), modesty, and discretion often discourage open discussion about menstruation.
- Many girls report receiving minimal or vague explanations about menarche, especially in rural or traditional households.
- Period poverty disproportionately impacts Hispanic communities in the U.S.
- Check out more Spanish  menstrual health resources! 

Asian American Youth

- Discussions around menstruation and puberty may be viewed as taboo or inappropriate.
- Involve community elders to gain trust, and provide materials in local languages, ensuring accessibility.
- Highlight the normalcy of menstruation while respecting traditions.
- Emphasize that it is normal for our bodies to change as we grow up.⁴⁰

Indigenous Communities

- Native communities often refer to their periods as “our moon.”⁴⁰
- Traditions around menstruation vary widely across tribes. Practices such as moon lodges (e.g., Ojibwe) were historically spaces of rest and reflection.
- Settler colonialism reframed menstruation as shameful, erasing sacred traditions.
- Today, Indigenous women are revitalizing ceremonies as acts of empowerment and cultural healing.

“I love the idea of the cultural competency portion, which informs educators on these students' backgrounds their cultural understanding of menstruation. I am glad to know how that impacts them, because my experience is very different from so many of my students experience. The idea of having somewhere to go to see what cultural ideas they have towards that time period in life? I think that's awesome.”

~5th grade teacher

Overall...

- Education should focus on normalizing menstruation, using school programs to provide comprehensive health-based information, and encouraging family discussions to curb silence or stigma.
- For more insight on global perspectives around menstruation, translated resources for families, [visit Section F of the Appendix.](#)

Citation:
40. Community Partner &
Organization Conversations,
Personal Correspondences, 2025

This content was reviewed by
organizations specifically
working within each specific
community mentioned to
ensure research and community
reality were aligned.

How to Talk About Menstruation & Menstrual Products (By Grade)

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How We Talk About Menstruation

Research shows that using terminology and vocabulary around body parts and functions reduces stigma, provides clarity, and empowers students with the knowledge that they need to respond to their physical, social, and emotional needs.

We strongly recommend that you read and reference the following definitions from the Glossary for the Global Menstrual Movement to support your work with students who menstruate across any stage of a child's development.



**A quick note, the legislation only requires menstrual products, but education is key for student to understand these products, their bodies, and so much more.*

CITATIONS:

22. Golfdarb, E. & Lieberman, L.D. (2021).

38. Period. Glossary for the global menstrual movement (2022)

“Now I think it's just kind of commonplace. Just like any change, it takes a while for people to acclimate and figure out what it's all about. But for now, I think they appreciate it.”

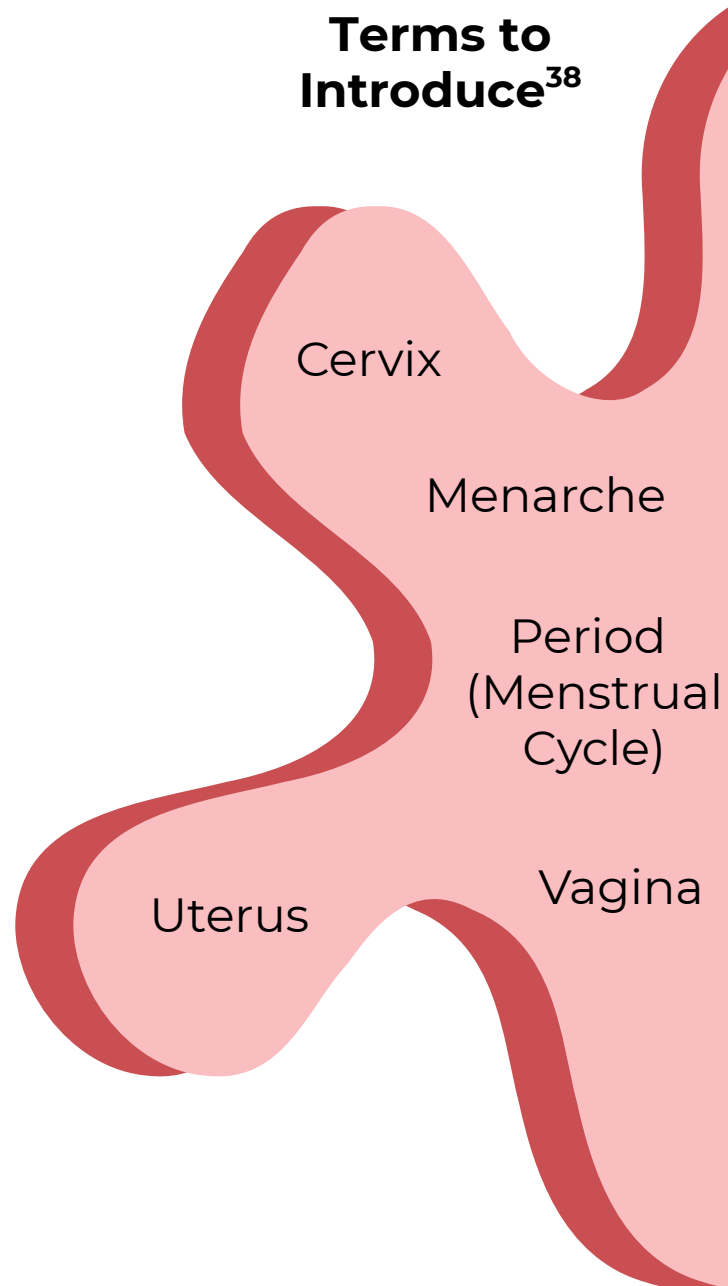
~Stacey Grunwald, RN

4a. Elementary Schools (Grades K-5)

Key Terms, Context, and Language to Support Elementary School Students

- The onset of a first period comes with variety of feelings - fear, worry, questions, or excitement.³²
- Emphasize specific care practices (such as how often to change pads) to teach product safety and promote healthy habits.
- Encourage students to turn to trusted adults in their life for questions rather than info gathering only from peers.³²
- The national average for a person's first period is 12.4 years old, but some students start periods earlier, around age 9.³²

Terms to Introduce³⁸



CITATIONS:

32. Mayo Clinic Press Editors, (2023).

38. Period. Glossary for the global menstrual movement (2022)

“Students would also see the benefit of explaining the menstrual process during 5th grade.”

~Minnesota Middle School Student

4a. Elementary Schools (Grades K-5)

Sample Questions and Answer Recommendations

Q: What's in that new box hanging on the wall in the bathroom?

A: That is a dispenser for menstrual products, like pads or tampons.

Q: When is that going to happen to me?

A: First periods occur at the time that is right for your body. Everyone gets their first period at a different point, between ages 9-13, or older.³²

Q: I've heard people talk about periods but no one will tell me what it means. What is a period?

A: A period is part of the menstrual cycle, which is when people who have a uterus prepare physically to one day have a baby.

One of the two ovaries releases an egg (called ovum) that travels to the uterus. The uterus grows an extra lining to protect that ovum. Once your body realizes that it is not fertilized during the month, then your body sheds the ovum and lining as blood through the vagina.²

CITATIONS:

² Cleveland Clinic. (2022).

³² Mayo Clinic Press Editors. (2023).

“I know at this point I've had second graders and third graders that have had their periods before because they've come and told me or their parent has called me. So I think it's important [to teach and talk about menstruation] because at that age level, all your peers maybe not experiencing the same thing.”

~School District Nurse, District 2753

4b. Middle Schools (Grades 6-8)

Key Terms, Context, and Language to Support Middle School Students

- Middle schoolers can have irregular cycles in the early years post menarche.³³
- Middle school menstruators may not know when to expect their period and will likely need access to period products more readily available at school.³⁴
- It is helpful to create an open dialogue around periods so that students can ask questions and receive support.³²
- Comparison occurs around menstruation as some middle schoolers will have their period and others will not.

Terms to Introduce³⁸

Menstrual Blood

Menstrual Equity

Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)

Menstrual Product Standards

Ovulation

CITATIONS:

32. Mayo Clinic Press Editors. (2023)

33. Dillard, C. (2019). Learning for Justice. Equity, Period.

34. McGregor, A. (2024) School Library Journal.

38. Period. Glossary for the global menstrual movement (2022)

“Pretty much any bathroom that would be frequented by a fourth grader or on up got a machine with tampons and pads in them. And it's a delayed reaction machine, so they can't just sit and push, push, push.”

~School District Nurse, District 2753

4b. Middle Schools (Grades 6–8)

Sample Questions and Answer Recommendations

Q: I am having really bad cramps. How can I make it stop?

A: Thank you for telling me. I recommend going to see the nurse or talk to your caregiver at home.

Q: Do I have to use a tampon?

A: No. You have an option to choose which product is right for you and what you are comfortable with. Another common alternative is a pad. The important thing is that you change your products regularly to ensure healthy hygiene practices. (See use recommendations on page 17).¹⁷

Q: It's so awkward!! I don't like talking about my time of the month but the boys found a tampon and won't stop making fun of us. What should I say?

A: Talking about periods can seem challenging at first. Usually people make fun of things they don't understand. We can have a group conversation about what periods are. It is important for everyone to know about periods. If you personally don't menstruate, others you know do or will. Having a period is a normal bodily function.

CITATION:
17. (ACOG). (2023)

“Oh, they [middle schoolers] were totally messing with them, yeah. Yeah, totally. [Over time] they got over it. They got used to it. And in all honesty, the high schoolers were telling the junior high kids to knock it off because they needed it [the period products].”

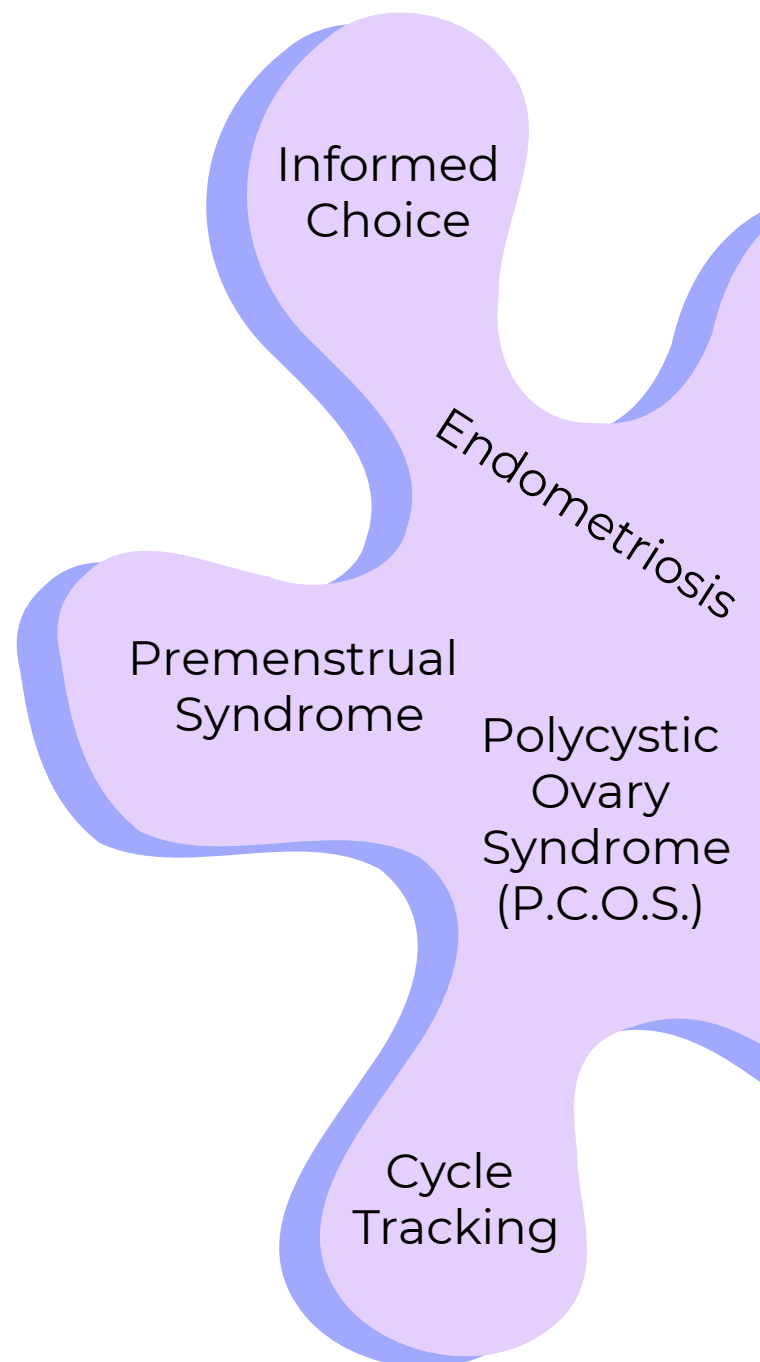
~Stacey Grunewald, RN

High Schools (Grades 9-12)

Key Terms, Context, and Language to Support High School Students

- High school can be a time full of physical, social, and emotional changes. Menstruating students may be used to their period, while for others it evokes conversation amongst peers or new symptoms.³⁵
- Students tend to notice what is going on in their body, and compare their body or experiences to others. 74% of students have questions about their period.³⁶
- Rather than telling students to “just deal with it,” validate and understand symptoms. Common symptoms before or during the menstrual period include headaches, back pain, cramping, changes in mood, breast tenderness, or feeling extra tired.²³

Terms to Introduce³⁸



CITATIONS:

23. Schmitt, M. L., et. al, (2022)

35. Children's Hospital of Orange County (2023)

36. PMS, Cramps and Irregular Periods (2018)

38. Period. Glossary for the global menstrual movement (2022)

High Schools (Grades 9-12)

Educator Tip:

Show the Science of Menstruation Video to these students to break down some common myths!

Sample Questions and Answer Recommendations

Q: I feel like I know more about the anatomy of a frog than I do my own body. Why don't we learn more about menstrual health in our classes?¹

A: It sounds to me like you are looking for more resources about menstrual health. There is a Toolkit that you can read to learn more about it! Otherwise, it can be an effective strategy to be a part of the change and talk about menstruation (if you feel comfortable) to normalize the topic.

Q: Why do my periods last 3 days but my friends' lasts 7 days?

A: Everyone's flow is different. There are different spans. If you have any concerns, it is best to talk to a medical professional.²⁰

Q: It feels like I'm on a rollercoaster each month with all of my different moods. Is there something wrong with me?

A: Not necessarily. There are different hormonal patterns that coincide with each week of your menstrual cycle.² However, if your emotions seem to be out of your control or extreme, this could be a sign of a larger diagnosis such as PMDD.¹² Consult a healthcare provider to find more support.

CITATIONS:

1. State of Period. (2023)
2. Cleveland Clinic. (2022)
- 20.(ACOG). (2023)
12. (ACOG).(2023)

“The custodians do check them [dispensers] every day to add to it. I figure if it's out, maybe somebody needed more then they [students] must be taking them [period products], which is fine. I know for sure at the high school, they're getting refilled and used.”

~Nurse Jess

Adulthood (Post-Graduation)

What do I need to know after I finish school?

- Recognize that menstrual health and cycles can change over time due to a variety of factors (health status, stress, the environment, age, and more). This impacts fertility. Talk to your healthcare provider about specifics (rather than gathering info from social media).
- Advocate, if you are able, for menstrual equity in your workplaces or communities that you reside in. One great way is to ensure that there are period products available in bathrooms.
- Health education does not always encompass menopause. Be sure to utilize additional resources and information about menopause - the information is out there, but often requires that you go in search for it.
- If embarking on your journey to higher education in Minnesota, read about the continuous legislation for free period products in schools for college menstruators!

Terms to Introduce³⁸

Uterine Fibroids

Menopause

Peri-menopause

Menstrual Leave

Gender Pain Gap

Educator Tip:

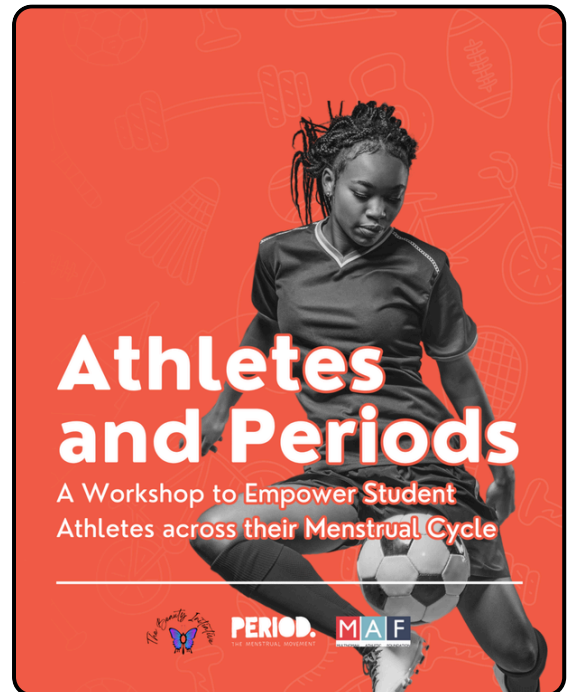
Tell your students about Period Action Day!³⁸ It happens every October on the second Saturday of the month.

Extracurriculars, Sports, & Other Spaces

Periods don't end when the school day does!

We know that the school day often expands beyond the walls of the classroom into afterschool activities, sports, and work time before students leave the building. Here are some tips to support menstrual equity after school.

- Please take time to note whether bathroom access for students looks different outside of regular school hours for extracurricular activities. If so, ensure that products are readily available in bathrooms regularly used by 4th-12th grade students after school.
- Train afterschool staff and volunteers on where products should be during orientation and share reminders at the start of each school year.
- Learn about REDS (Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport) which is the absence of periods due to excessive exercises compared to caloric intake. REDS has long term implications for bone, cardiovascular, and fertility related health.⁴⁸
- Consider how menstruation impacts student athletes & other activities.



Check out the free “Coaching Her” modules for a curriculum for coaches and volunteer adults working with menstruating youth in afterschool sports!³⁹



AVAILABLE NOW

Two *NEW* modules help coaches create supportive, period-friendly environments.

Designed & tested to be culturally relevant, globally applicable, interactive, and age appropriate.

1

Understanding the Complete Menstrual Cycle

2

Tackling Menstrual Taboos & Creating Period-Friendly Environments

COACHING HER

www.coachingher.org

CITATIONS:

39. Coaching Her (2025).

48. REDS; Boston Children's Hospital (2025)

Appendix

All Appendix materials have printable 8.5x11 versions without the headings within the following accessible **toolkit Google Drive**. If you are looking for a version you can't find please let us know at mnperiodtoolkit@gmail.com.

Toolkit Printable Resources



A. Legislation Overview



G. Take Home One Pager



B. Tampon Safety FAQ



H. Menstrual Health (For School Nurses)



C. Bathroom Signage



I. Menstrual Health Conditions



D. Menstrual Health 101 Worksheet



J. Classroom Discussion Guide



E. Product Respect & Misuse Redirection



K. Model School Board Policy



F. Cultural Competency



Survey Responses Data Flyer



Return to Table of Contents



Legislation Overview

The Law: At a Glance MINNESOTA MENSTRUAL EQUITY

Access to Menstrual Products (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]) requires school districts in Minnesota to provide free menstrual products in public schools.

WHO All public schools serving grades 4-12.


WHAT All bathrooms regularly used by students must supply free period products in public schools serving students grades 4-2


WHEN Effective January 1, 2024. K-12 School districts are required to be in full compliance.

WHERE All public school restrooms in the state of Minnesota, including girls, boys, and gender neutral student restrooms.

HOW Funding is provided to school districts by the Department of Education and is calculated based on \$2 per student per year.

WHY Period poverty is a rampant issue in the United States, and can impact a student's ability to do well in school.

 **1 in 4** Nearly 1 in 4 students in the U.S. have struggled to afford period products.

 **4 in 5** Students believe they are taught more about the biology of a frog, than the human female body.

TAKE ACTION You can help **advocate** for menstrual equity in your community by making sure your local schools are in compliance with the law requiring products in public schools. Talk to your school board, PTA/parent organizations, teachers, or parents about how you could be involved. **Reach out to your local legislators** to tell them what you think of this program and what other support is needed for menstruators (like product access in libraries and other public buildings)!

@periodadvocacy.mn | mnperiodtoolkit@gmail.com | www.period.org

Tampon Safety FAQ

Are There Metals in Tampons?

Recent research has identified trace amounts of metals, including lead, in tampons across several brands, though it remains undetermined whether these metals leach out during use or pose any health risks. While these findings raise important questions, **they do not conclude that tampons are unsafe but more research is required and ongoing.**¹⁹ The FDA and other researchers are actively investigating whether such metals could be absorbed by the body and plan to share additional findings once studies are complete and peer reviewed. Although many contaminants are detected at low levels, this underscores the need for greater transparency and further standardized safety testing for menstrual products.

What Does The Research Say?

1. Researchers identified metals, including lead, in all tested tampons from 14 brands. This research stemmed out of an environmental health lab looking at pesticide residuals.
2. Uncertainty remains about whether these metals leach out during use or pose health risks.
3. The study aimed to understand the presence of metals in tampons, not to assess their health impacts directly.
4. Dr. Shearston emphasized the need for additional studies and transparency from manufacturers regarding product composition.

Full Research Paper



Research Author Interview



FDA Toxicology Updates



Okay So Now What?

Advocacy groups, researchers, and policymakers are working to improve research and regulations and ensure that period products are safe and reliable for all users. For those concerned, consider exploring brands that disclose their ingredients (noting that organic tampons were equally as contaminated in this study) or alternative products like menstrual cups or reusable pads while continuing to support efforts toward improved product safety and transparency. Further advocacy and research is needed to ensure period products are safe, but for now you should keep using the products that feel like the right decision for you!

For Educators

This study went viral and created with a lot of misinformation and fear for young people. This is a concern that students shared about products in schools, so its important to share what current information says while also validating concerns.

Customizable Bathroom Signage

Toolkit Printable
Resources



How to Use:

1. **Print** out any of the following bathroom signs.
2. **Add school logo** or disclaimers (Ex: add language about local school practices, or information about who to go to if products are out of stock).
3. **Tape** up in the bathrooms to encourage common practice.

Sample Signage Recommendations

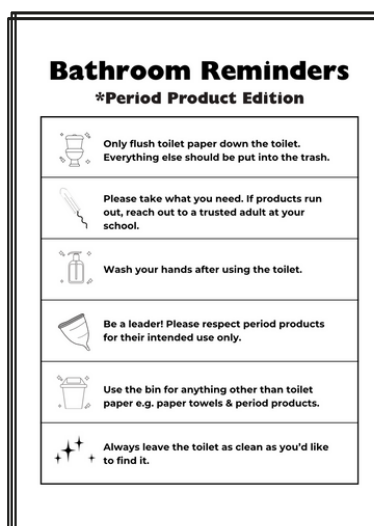
1. **Elementary**
 - a. Purple “Only Flush Toilet Paper” sign
 - b. Navy “Only Flush Toilet Paper” sign
 - c. White “Only Flush Toilet Paper” sign
2. **Middle**
 - a. Navy “Bathroom Reminders” sign
 - b. White “Products Belong in the Trash” sign
 - c. Purple “Period Product Reminders” sign
3. **High School**
 - a. Red “Period Products Edition” sign
 - b. Light Blue “Bathroom Reminders” sign
 - c. White “Bathroom Reminders” sign

“The printables will be amazing. We kind of make our own signs now, and sometimes the students make them and just hang them up in the bathroom if they feel like nobody's, like, taking care of things properly. So it'll be nice just to have some consistent, colorful sheets that we'll be able to laminate and print off.”

~Tammie Knick,
School Social Worker, South Central MN

Bathroom Signage Examples

Click on each poster to jump to that printable pdf! Bilingual options are available too.



Menstrual Health 101

Worksheet

True or False

1. Menstruation (AKA a Period) is the monthly shedding of the lining of the uterus. *True / False*
2. Menstruation is also known by the terms menses, menstrual period, menstrual cycle or period. *True / False*
3. The menstrual cycle is a way for the body to release toxins. *True / False*
4. Menstrual blood is partly blood and partly tissue from the inside of the uterus. *True / False*
5. During menstruation menstrual blood flows from the uterus through the cervix and out of the body through the vagina. *True / False*
6. Menstruation is based on pheromones that can cause someone's cycle to sync with others around them. *True / False*
7. Pain and extra heavy bleeding during periods can be a sign something is wrong and should be signs to visit the doctor. *True / False*

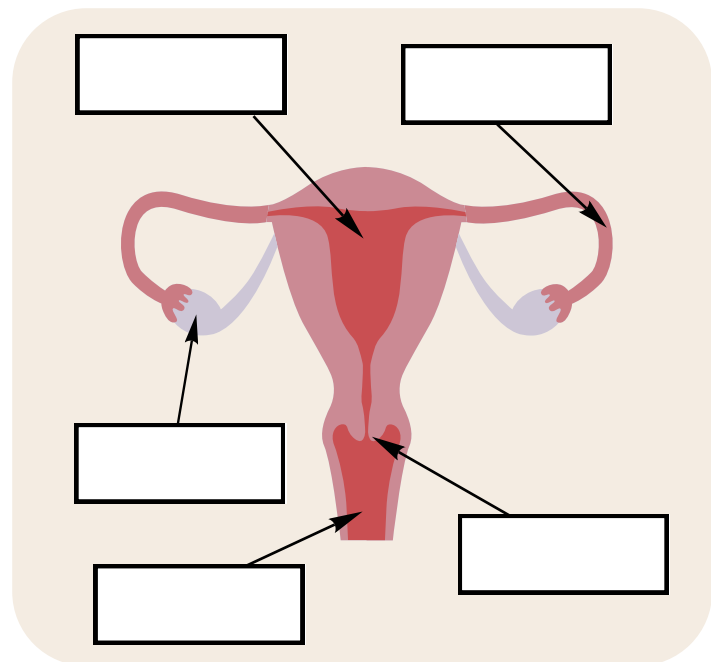
Label the parts of this reproductive system

Word Bank:

Uterus Vagina Ovary
Cervix Fallopian Tubes




What are the two cycles that make up the menstrual cycle?

Hint: Each includes a word from the word bank above.



After how many hours should you change each type of menstrual product?

Fill in the box next to each product.

 Pad	
 Tampon	
 Menstrual Cup	

Menstrual Health 101

Worksheet- KEY

50

Menstrual Health- True or False

1. Menstruation (AKA a Period) is the monthly shedding of the True / False lining of the uterus.
2. Menstruation is also known by the terms menses, menstrual True / False period, menstrual cycle or period.
3. The menstrual cycle is a way for the body to release toxins. True / False
4. Menstrual blood is partly blood and partly tissue from the True / False inside of the uterus.
5. During menstruation menstrual blood flows from the uterus True / False through the cervix and out of the body through the vagina.
6. Menstruation is based on pheromones that can cause someone's cycle to sync with others around them. True / False
7. Pain and extra heavy bleeding during periods can be a sign True / False something is wrong and should be signs to visit the doctor.

Label the parts of this reproductive system

Word Bank:

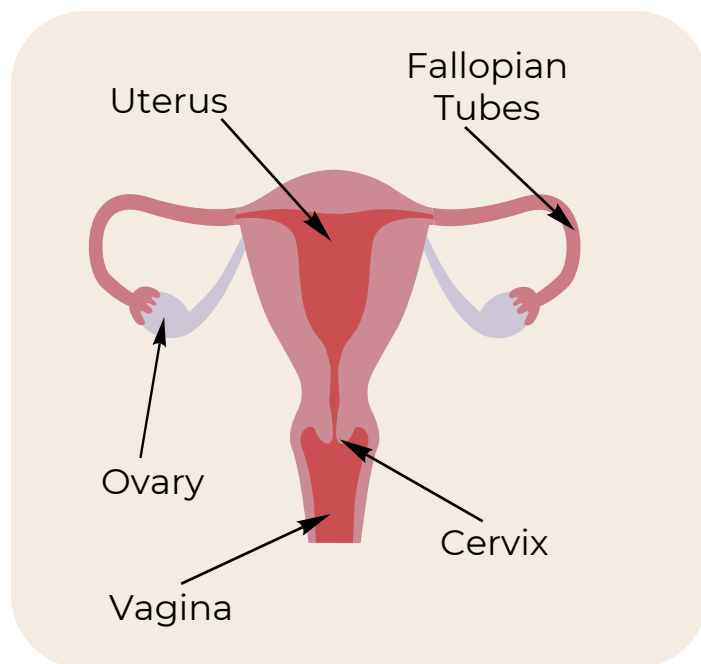
Uterus Vagina Ovary
Cervix Fallopian Tubes

What are the two cycles that make up the menstrual cycle?

Hint: Each includes a word from above

Uterine Cycle

Ovarian Cycle



After how many hours should you change each type of menstrual product?

Fill in the box next to each product.

 Pad	4-8 Hours
 Tampon	4-8 Hours
 Menstrual Cup	10-12 Hours

*Please visit the Menstrual Health 101 Section of the Minnesota Menstrual Products in Schools toolkit for full citations and health information.

Product Respect & Misuse Redirection

When we surveyed schools earlier this year, concerns about vandalism and how to address it were among our responses. Of the 37 schools that shared issues with vandalism, 10 schools told us that all issues resolved over time and with educational reinforcement. When toilet paper ends up on the floor, schools do not remove all toilet paper from bathrooms and menstrual products should therefore also not be removed.

It is important to note that removing products from bathrooms takes them away from students who need or depend on them to be at school, and puts schools out of compliance with the law.

(Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023]).

Tips for Redirection (School Wide)

- Host a community meeting at the beginning of the year.
- Emphasize the importance of collective resources such as “please respect these products to make sure all of our classmates have the chance to use what they may need.”
- Recognize that the “newness” behind products in bathrooms will fade and it will be common practice for students to see products in bathrooms so they should learn to treat them respectfully over time.

Tips for Facilities Staff

- Check where the valves are in the bathrooms to shut of the water in select locations if toilets clog.
- Fill dispensers/containers as needed, with regular re-supplying. Some schools prefer to supply a daily amount of products and restock them each day rather than leaving a larger supply in the bathroom at once.
- Create a regular system to repurchase products.
- In most cases, facilities staff are responsible for stocking products. We encourage facilities staff to collaborate with school nurses and other staff for education and support.
- Add bathroom signage where appropriate.

“Having more, posters within the bathroom would be helpful. We waited to talk about it [product use and respect] until a problem arose. So, maybe having something right off the bat that we could... use as a resource to talk about and inform the kids would be helpful.”

~5th grade teacher

Cultural Approaches to Menstruation

Within the US and across the world, people menstruate. Cultural nuance and specificity influences different social norms and behaviors surrounding menstrual health practices. The following resources describe a variety of different implications, understandings, and familial traditions that occur in different parts of the world. This resource list is by no means exhaustive, but simply a means to learn more about additional perspectives and cultural approaches to menstruation. To learn more, click on each of the following links!

**Days for Girls International:
Men Who Know (Worldwide)**

**Amplifying Period Poverty
(In Hispanic Culture)**

**PERIOD. End of Sentence.
Netflix and YouTube. (India)**

**Transnational Engagements:
Cultural & Religious Practices**

**Exploring Global
Menstrual Traditions**

**Menstruation Rituals from
Indigenous Communities**

**Breaking “Code Red”: Why
Words Matter (Worldwide)**

**The Menstrual Movement
in the Media (Great Britain)**

**My Period, My Culture.
Recap. (Native American)**

**Harmony and Hygiene in
Menstruation (China)**

“Some families are not comfortable talking with their children about it and the students are left to figure it out on their own. We need to make sure that all students are educated and knowledgeable about what is going on with their bodies.”

~High School Staff Member

Take Home One Pager:

Minnesota Menstrual Products in Schools

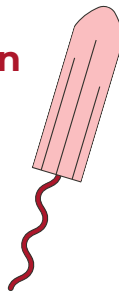
Take Home Flyer

Did you know? Access to Menstrual Products (Minn. Stat. 121A.212 [2023])

now requires school districts in Minnesota to provide free menstrual products in Minnesota public schools serving students grades 4-12.

Why is the Menstrual Products in Schools Statute necessary?

Students across Minnesota banded together and advocated for this law to combat period poverty and equip students with support and tools that they need while menstruating during the school day. Multiple community organizations, educators, parents, and politicians advocated for this law because more than 25% of students in the US do not have regular access to period products.¹



What Will School Teach about Periods & Menstruation?

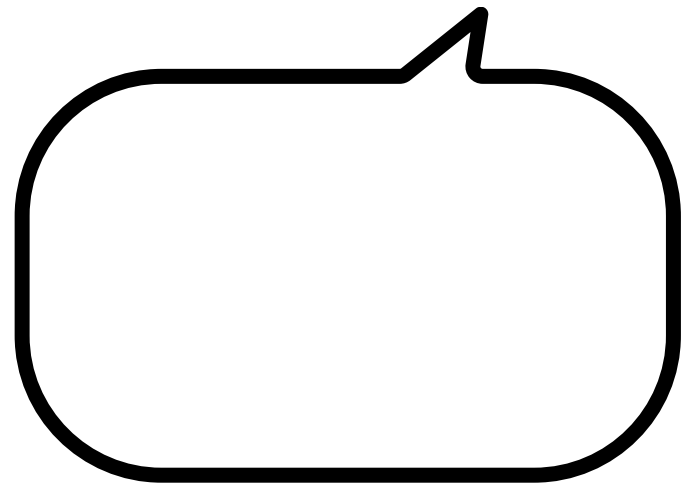
This is a great question and will vary depending on your school district. The Minnesota Menstrual Products in Schools Toolkit makes recommendations for educators to cover menstrual health education for different grade levels, but education is not currently a required component of the law.

Students: Add school specific information or questions for family members here!

At Home Conversations



We know that different families and cultures have different ways they talk about periods or use products related to menstruation. Take this opportunity to talk about what you want your young people to know!

We recommend talking about health habits and menstrual product options as students will be seeing pads and tampons in the bathrooms at school.



Pads & Tampons 101

Menstruation is a normal healthy process. It is important to change menstrual products often to avoid health issues.

 Pad	Change every 4-8 Hours
 Tampon	Change every 4-8 Hours

Let's Keep The Conversation Going...

Parents, Families, and Students are encouraged to learn more about the Minnesota Menstrual Products in Schools Toolkit & more at <https://wfmn.org/advocacy>.



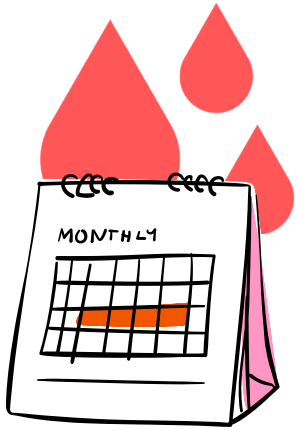
Toolkit &
Resource
Drive

Toolkit
Advocacy
Link



Menstrual Health (School Nurse Flyer)

What is a Period?

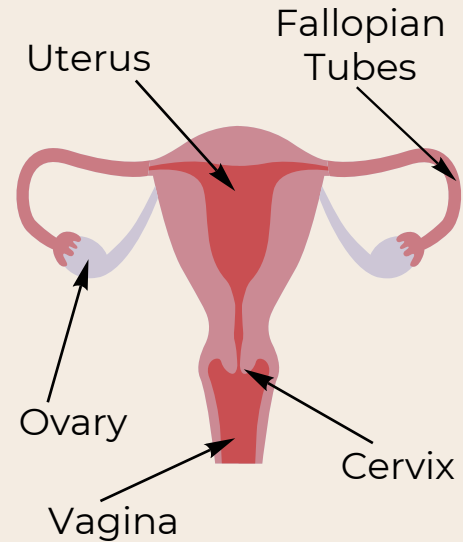


Menstruation (AKA a Period) is the monthly shedding of the lining of the uterus.

Menstruation is also known by the terms menses, menstrual period, menstrual cycle, or period.

Menstrual blood is partly blood and partly tissue from the inside of the uterus. During menstruation, menstrual blood flows from the uterus through the cervix and out of the body through the vagina.²


Reproductive System Basics



Menstrual Health Habits

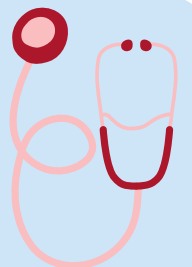
Menstruation is a normal healthy process, but it is important to change menstrual products often to avoid health issues. See this chart about different kinds of products.¹⁷

Bacteria can cause health issues or odor with all period products if left in for too long, so make sure to change products regularly.

 Pad	Change every 4-8 Hours
 Tampon	Change every 4-8 Hours
 Menstrual Cup	Change every 10-12 Hours ¹⁸



Menstruation is a normal part of puberty but can sometimes have symptoms that are good to talk to a doctor or nurse about- we are here to help! Let us know if you also need additional period products!



CITATIONS:
2. Cleveland Clinic, (2022)
17. ACOG, (2023)
18. van Eijk, A., et. al., (2019)

Menstrual Health Conditions & PMS

Endometriosis

- Endometriosis is a common chronic disease that affects roughly 10% of reproductive age women and girls globally.⁴¹
- Endometriosis is a disease in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus. It can cause severe pain in the pelvis and make it harder to get pregnant.⁴¹
- The main symptom of endometriosis is pelvic pain often linked with menstruation.⁴²

Learn More About Endometriosis



Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) affects an estimated 6–13% of reproductive-aged women up to 70% of whom remain undiagnosed.⁴³
- PCOS is the commonest cause of anovulation and a leading cause of infertility.
- PCOS is a hormonal problem often indicated by irregular periods, excess facial or body hair, and more, and treatment may lower risk of long term complications.⁴⁴

Learn More About PCOS



Uterine Fibroids

- Uterine fibroids are common growths of the uterus that vary in size.
- Many people have uterine fibroids sometime during their lives. Though many uterine fibroids aren't dangerous they can cause pain or lead to complications.
- Though many people have no symptoms, the most common symptoms of uterine fibroids when present include heavy menstrual bleeding or painful periods.⁴⁵

Premenstrual Disorders & PMDD

- Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) is a severe, sometimes disabling extension of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Although PMS and PMDD both have physical and emotional symptoms, PMDD causes extreme mood shifts that can disrupt daily life and damage relationships.⁴⁶
- PMDD is a serious, long-term (chronic) condition that does need treatment to manage symptoms beyond options available for other types of PMS.

CITATIONS:

41. WHO. (2023)

43. WHO. (2025)

45. Mayo Clinic (2023)

42. Mayo Clinic. (2024)

44. Mayo Clinic (2022)

46. Mayo Clinic (2024)

“ I think we need to educate students on these products and why we use them. A lot of students do not have the knowledge or understanding of using them so I think that having a course about why we are providing them, why its important to be respectful of the products and space etc [would be helpful].”

~Minnesota Teacher

Classroom Menstrual Health Discussion Guide

Possible Discussion Questions to Prompt Conversation Amongst Students⁴⁷

Questions for students under 5th grade:

1. What is a period?
2. How can you support someone at school when they are on their period?
3. What are the resources available at school to support menstruators at school?
4. Who can you go to if you or someone who know needs physical or social support while on their period?

Questions for students under 8th grade:

1. What are some ways that you can combat bullying or stigma around periods while at school?
2. What are some trusted sources to use when you want to learn more about menstruation?
3. What are some factors that influence a person's period?
4. What are examples of available menstrual products at school? In general?

Questions for students under 12th grade:

1. How are the communities you reside in championing menstrual health? Are there other ideas you can think of that would work to ensure more menstrual equity in our school community?
2. How does stigma around menstruation impact people who have a period?
3. What are some signs, causes, or symptoms of health conditions that occur and impact menstrual health?
4. What are some examples of how culture influences social understanding around menstruation?

CITATION:

47. DC Menstrual Health Education Standards. (2016)

“We believe that that's important for kids to stay in school and take care of their needs, rather than having an accident and then having to go home and change and that type of thing.”

~Tammie Knick, School Social Worker, South Central MN

Model School Board Policy

Menstrual Products

Minnesota law requires that all public and charter schools serving students in grades 4-12 provide free menstrual products in all restrooms regularly used by students.

The District recognizes that access to menstrual products is vital to ensuring the health, dignity, and full participation of all students and staff. The District has an interest in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. By providing free menstrual products as required by state law, the District seeks to further destigmatize menstruation and advance equitable educational access to all students.

Public and Charter Schools are required to stock menstrual products in all restrooms regularly used by students in grades 4-12. Students should be made aware of where free products are accessible, and who they can notify if products are missing or misused. The menstrual products shall be accessible and available at no cost, and the restrooms should be accessible during operating hours and whenever students are present. Menstrual products provided shall include, but are not limited to pads and tampons.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure an administrator is assigned at each school site within the District serving any grade 4-12, to ensure menstrual products are ordered and stocked in accordance with this policy.

Policy

Adopted: _____

Revised: _____

District:

Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. 121A.212 (2023)

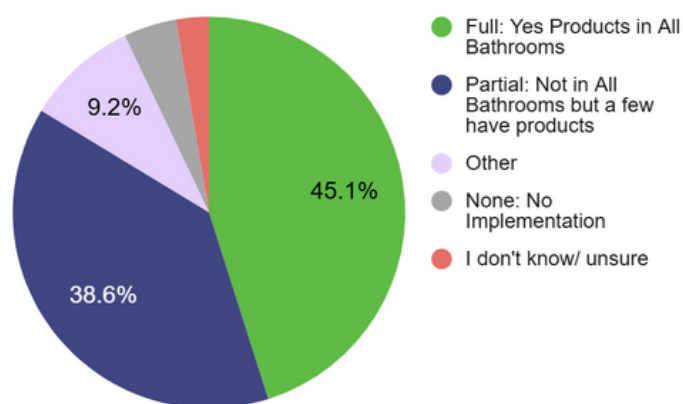
Minnesota Menstrual Products in Schools—Where Are We At?



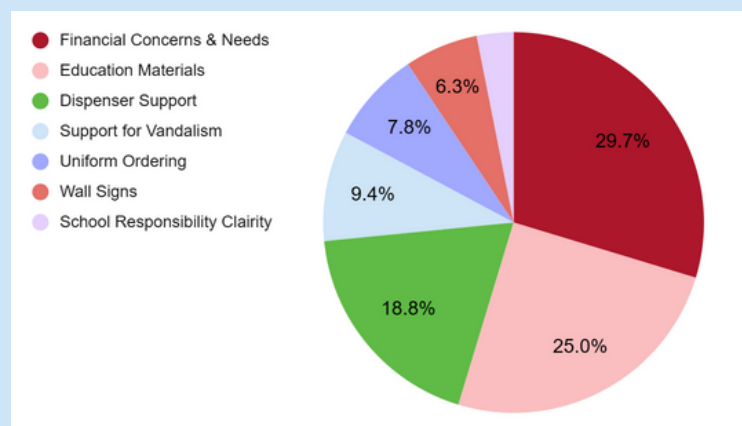
Preliminary Data Analysis from
the 2025 Minnesota Menstrual
Products Survey
March 2025

We Surveyed Over 200 Minnesota Students, Educators, School Nurses & More! Here's What They Said...

Implementation Status: 45% of respondents across the state said their school had products in all bathrooms- see reference map on the next page!



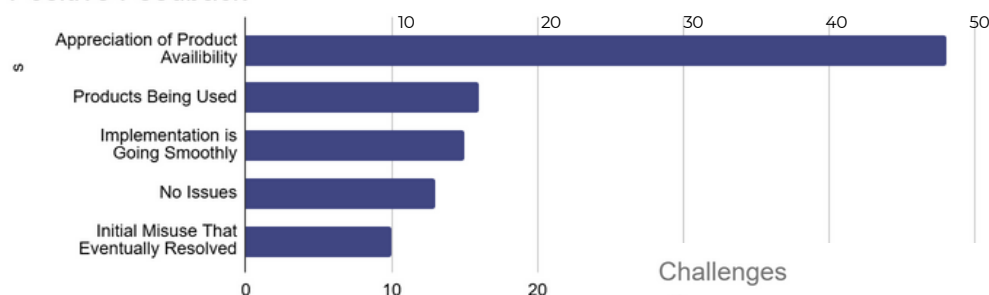
Support Needed: Education materials and funding topped the list of supports respondents said they needed to implement this new policy.



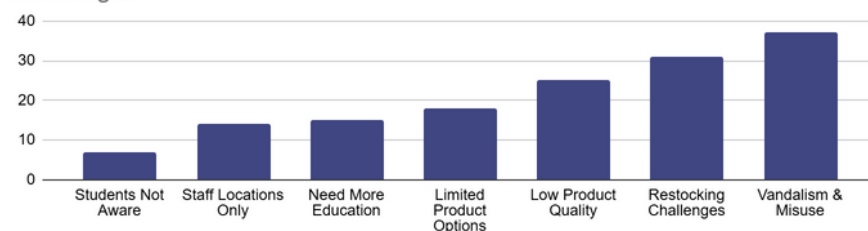
Positive Feedback & Challenges

Almost 50 people included significant appreciation for this program in their response! Many also mentioned that vandalism of products was something they were working to navigate.

Positive Feedback



Challenges



This data informed this toolkit.

We used the data, quotes, and responses from the survey to make sure resources requested were included in the toolkit!

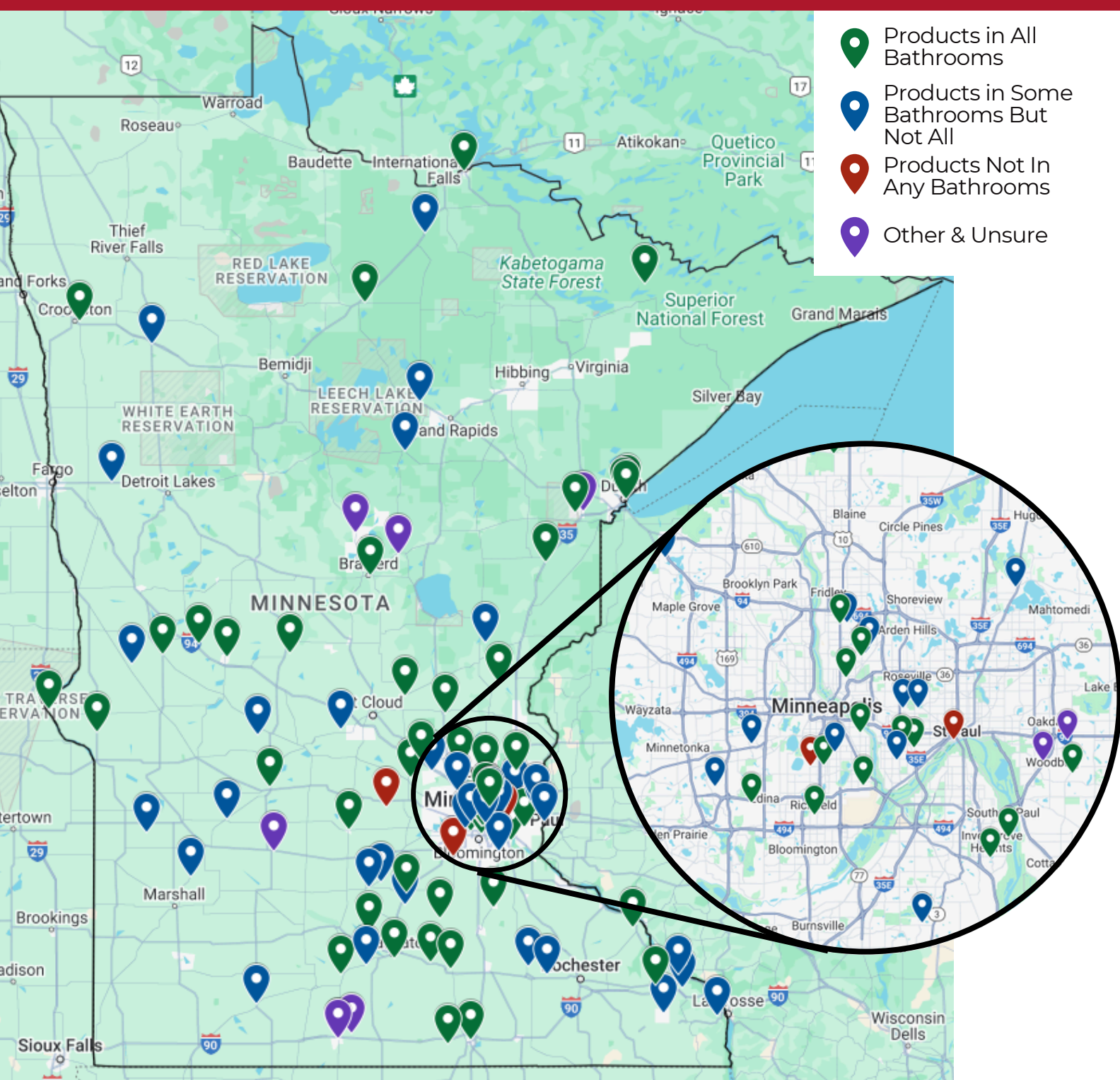
Contact Us To Learn More!

mnperiodtoolkit@gmail.com

The Minnesota Menstrual Equity Toolkit Project is a student led project supported by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and partial funding provided by the Center for Leadership Education in Maternal and Child Public Health at the University of Minnesota.

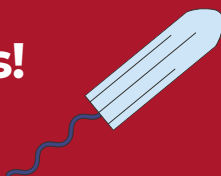
Minnesota Menstrual Products in Schools—Where Are We At?

Preliminary Data Analysis from
the 2025 Minnesota Menstrual
Products Survey
March 2025



Contact us to learn more about
this data and why it was
important to our process!

mnperiodtoolkit@gmail.com



Interactive Map Here
Labeled by District



Add Or Update
Your School Here



8. All Linked Resources

PERIOD. org
Education Materials →

<https://period.org/education>

Period Education UK
Lesson Plans & Slides →

<https://www.perioeducation.org/lessonplans>

DC Menstrual Health
Education Standards →

https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/WNS_MenstrualEduStandards_051923.pdf

MN Health Education
& Standards Creation →

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/hpe/>

Full Research
Paper →

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412024004355>

Research Author
Interview →

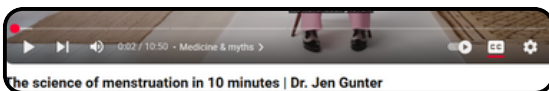
<https://medium.com/periodmovement/lets-talk-about-metals-in-tampons-q-a-with-dr-jeni-shearston-ffd6950a0a93>

FDA Toxicology
Updates →

<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/medical-device-regulatory-science-research-programs-conducted-ose/biocompatibility-and-toxicology-program-research-medical-devices-biocompatibility-and-toxicology>

Birth Control Methods
Chart: NRHTC →

https://rhntc.org/sites/default/files/resources/RHNTC-BCMethodsChart_13Feb2025.508_0.pdf



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYdYpKc9icQ>

Introduction to
Menstruation
A Classroom Curriculum

Facilitator Guide:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1r14G3p7eFqS93SOMorasaP_qJo0SIY_gGHL0ypV_pXs/edit?tab=t.0

Curriculum Slides:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGkQKG29IY/vx2q-Xp-ye_A5AS3KoEzrw/view?utm_content=DAGkQKG29IY&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=unique_links&utlId=ha01d9a7ec0



<https://amaze.org/video/puberty-flowing-with-confidence/>



PERIOD Spanish
Menstrual Health Podcast

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lslHOZssmY>

Full References

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9. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. (2024). Amenorrhea (absence of periods). American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/amenorrhea-absence-of-periods>
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11. Cleveland Clinic. (2025, February 18). Menometrorrhagia. Cleveland Clinic. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/menometrorrhagia-abnormal-uterine-bleeding>
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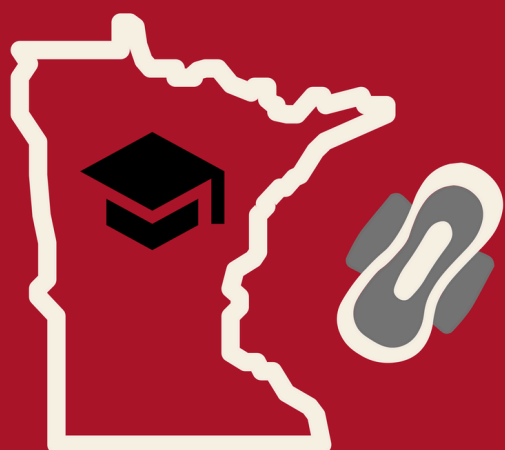
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