

Materials

- Cloth pads (unstitched, stitched and ready made) are made of different fabrics.
- Soft, clean, cotton cloth is ideal to make homemade cloth pads.
- Cloth pads have multiple layers to protect against leakage: top layer is in contact with body and allows blood to be absorbed. This should be of soft, clean cotton. The middle layer is the absorbent layer that absorbs menstrual fluid. The bottom layer prevents the menstrual blood from leaking and staining clothes. Some cloth pads can have "wings" on the side, just like a sanitary pad, to attach the pad securely to the underwear.

Use & Disposal

- Change pad every 3-6 hours.
- Wash genitals with water, and bathe daily to keep clean during menstruation.
- Wash cloth pad thoroughly and dry in direct sunlight.
- Discard when cloth is stained, has an odour, and becomes rough.



Reusable Sanitary Pads +

- Unstitched cotton cloth (homemade)
- Stitched cotton cloth pads (homemade)
- Stitched cotton cloth pads (ready made)

Availability

- Cloth pads can be made at home with clean cotton cloth. They can be unstitched or stitched, and can be made at low cost or no cost.
- Groups of girls or SHG members can also make cloth pads to sell at a low cost.
- Some companies and NGOs sell ready made cloth pads, and some are available online. Such readymade cloth pads can cost Rs 50 - 250 per pad.



Disposable Sanitary Pads

Materials

- Many varieties of sanitary pads are available - some are slightly thick, and some are very thin (made with super absorbent polymer/SAP). Both absorb blood and prevent leakage when used well.
- Sanitary pads have three main parts: Top layer touches the body and allows the blood to be absorbed into the pad. This layer should be soft to touch. The middle layer absorbs and retains the menstrual blood, and is made of wood pulp. Some thin pads may have a gel sheet with SAP to absorb blood. The bottom layer, made of plastic, is a leak proof layer that prevents blood from leaking and straining clothes. The outer side of the bottom layer has glue that helps the pad stick to the underwear.
- Many pads have wings that prevent leakage from the side and stick the pad securely.

Availability

- Available in a pack of 6-8 pads, and in larger pack size of 15 pads.
- Government supply is available with ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, SHG members, community workers, and in schools and health facilities.
- Commercially pads available in local stores and medical shops
- Cost varies from INR 1-5 per pad.
- Government distributes pads for free or at low cost.

Use & Disposal

- Change pad every 3-6 hours.
- Wash genitals with water, and bathe daily to keep clean.
- Discard pads after single use, and before it tears, smells, or starts to leak.
- Discard used pads wrapped in paper in a dustbin.
- Consult Doctor before using medicated sanitary pads.

Materials

- The menstrual cup is made with medical grade silicon and is worn inside the vagina.
- The "cup" collects the blood, and the stem at the bottom helps to remove the cup.

Use & Disposal

- Menstrual cups needs to be used for a few menstrual cycles to gain familiarity and comfort.
- Wash genitals with water, and bathe daily to keep clean during menstruation.
- Wash menstrual cup with soap and regular soap thoroughly at the end of the period, dry well, store safely.
- Cup can also be sterilized in boiling water for 5 mins.



Reusable Menstrual Cups

Availability

- Cost is Rs 200 upwards for a single cup.
- Available online and in select medical shops in large cities.
- NGOs and Government initiatives in some States/districts provide the menstrual cup to girls and women, and support use.



Compostable Disposable Sanitary Pads

Materials

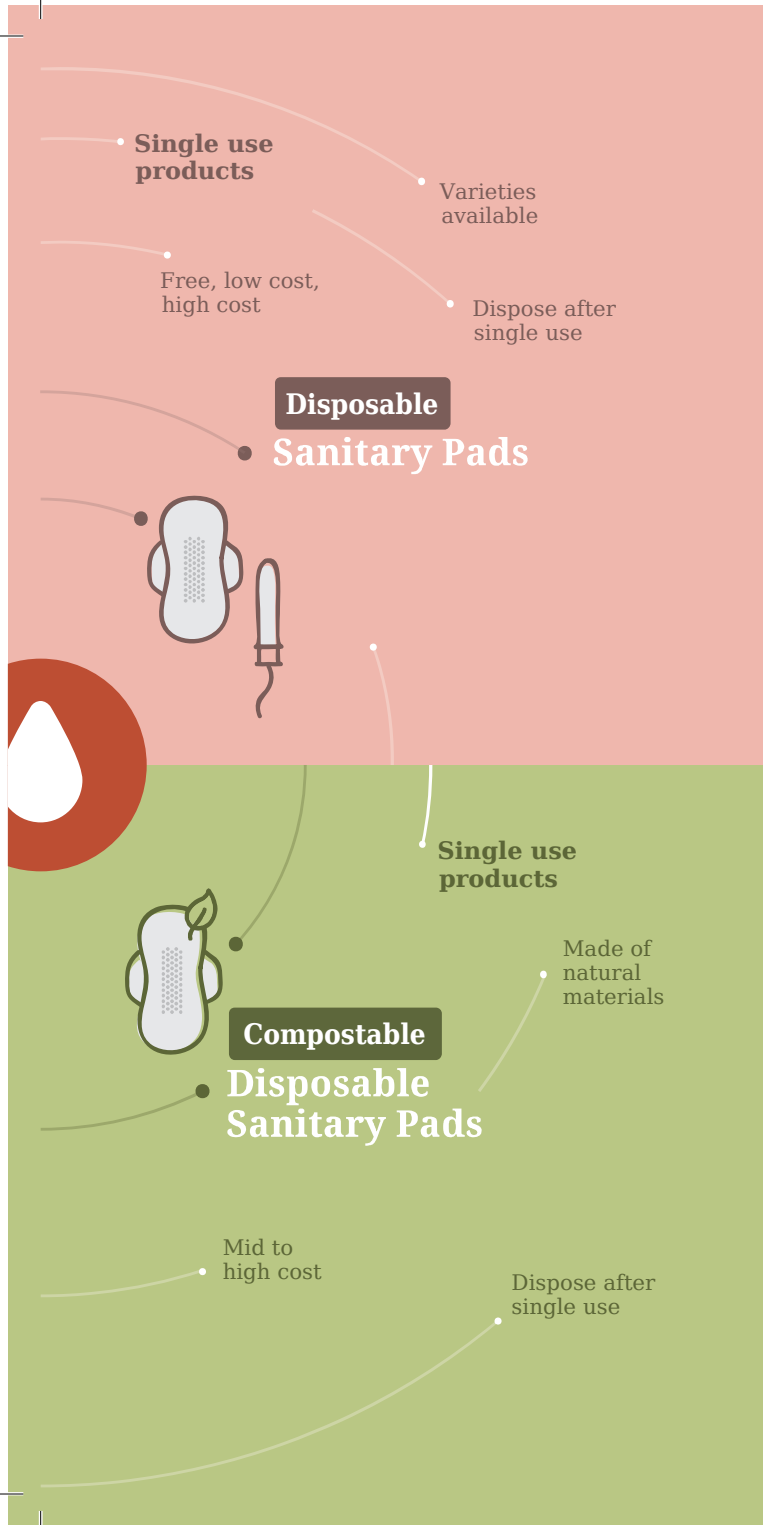
- These pads are made of natural substances and use limited plastic or use bio plastics.
- Sanitary pads have three main parts: Top layer touches the body and allows the blood to be absorbed into the pad. This layer should be soft to touch. The middle layer absorbs and retains the menstrual blood, and is made of pulp made from natural fibers. The bottom layer, is a leak proof layer that prevents blood from leaking and straining clothes. Outer side of the bottom layer has glue that helps the pad stick to the underwear.
- Many pads have wings that prevent leakage from the side and stick the pad securely.

Availability

- Cost is Rs 5 - 25 per pad. A pack can cost Rs 40 upwards for 8 pads.
- Pads available only in select places, online, and with manufacturers of such pads.

Use & Disposal

- Change pad every 3-6 hours.
- Wash genitals with water, and bathe daily to keep clean.
- Discard pads after single use, and before it tears, smells, or starts to leak.
- Discard used pads wrapped in paper in a dustbin.
- Consult Doctor before using medicated sanitary pads.



Menstrual materials and disposal

Waste Management	Waste Reduction	Unsafe Disposal		Waste Transformation	
	Fewer products used	Open burning	Throwing in the open	Incineration	Composting and deep burial
Disposable Sanitary Pads	✗	✗	✗	✳	✳
Disposable Compostable Sanitary Pads	✗	✗	✗	✳	✓
Reusable Sanitary Pads	✓	✗	✗	✳	✳
Menstrual Cups	✓	✗	✗	?	✗

✗ Unsuitable ✳ Suitable, but dependent on technology used and type of product ✓ Suitable ? Insufficient evidence

Note: Only recommended incinerators that meet design and emission parameters as per Central and State Pollution Control Boards and Solid Waste Management Rules 2016.



Adapted from material developed by Development Solutions, MHAi, WaterAid India and University of Liverpool.

