

Menstrual Cup - The Smart Woman's Choice

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Menstruation is a visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of the endometrium. However, it is subjected to stringent social stigma in developing countries like India. Different sanitary products are used by women all across India such as reusable sanitary pads, disposable sanitary pads, tampons, cloth, and period pants. In India, Menstrual cups have been available since decades but their use is limited compared to the widespread acceptance and use of disposable sanitary napkins



MENSTRUAL CUP

A menstrual cup is a type of reusable menstrual hygiene product. It's a small, flexible funnel-shaped cup made of rubber or silicone which is insert into vagina to catch and collect the menstrual blood. Depending on the flow, a person can wear a cup for up to 12 hours. A menstrual cup has the following parts (Fig 1)

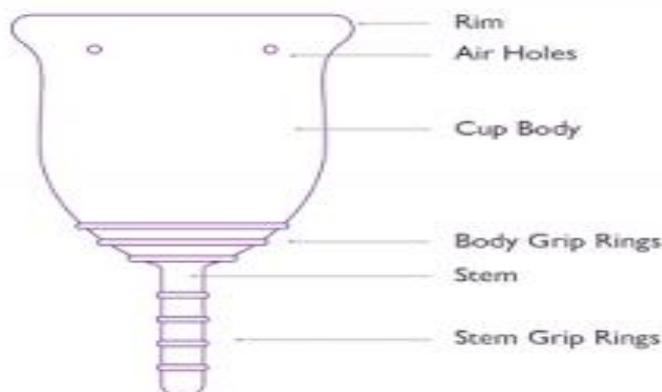


Fig 1: Parts of menstrual cup

Type	Menstrual cup-small	Menstrual cup-medium	Menstrual cup-large
Flow	Regular	Regular	Heavy
Volume capacity	up to 15 ml	up to 22 ml	up to 30 ml
Size fit as per age	Teens - Below 18 years	Above 18 years	Above 30 years
Adults	—	✓	✓
Teens	✓	—	—
Suitability	First time users Medium body built Not given birth	Average body built May or may not have given birth	Above average body built Have given birth
Medical Grade Silicone	✓	✓	✓
8 hours wear time	✓	✓	✓



Fig 2 : Different sizes of menstrual cup

2. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE SIZE:

Selection of menstrual cup is based on age, length of cervix (Fig 3), amount of flow, firmness and flexibility of the cup, cup capacity, strength of pelvic floor muscles, vaginal or caesarean delivery

It often takes some trial and error to find the correct size of menstrual cup. If one size or brand isn't quite working, it's a good idea to try other options.

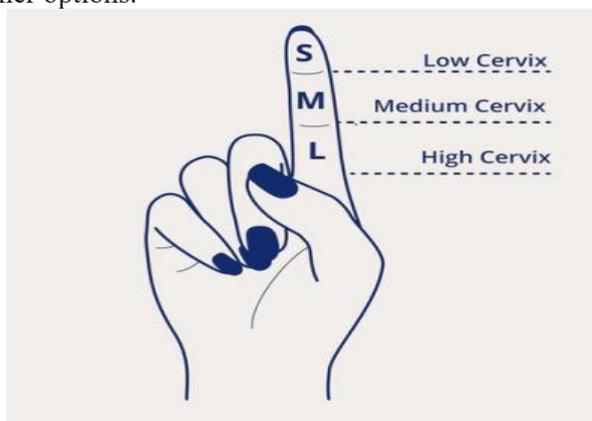


Fig 3: Measuring cervical length

3. PRELIMINARIES OF USING MENSTRUAL CUP

1. Boil a pot of water, and put the cup into the boiling water for no more than 10 minutes and carefully monitor it doesn't stick to the bottom of the pot and burn
2. At first time, the use of menstrual cup may feel uncomfortable. But "greasing" the cup can help make the process smooth. Before insertion of cup, lubricate the rim with water or a water-based lube (lubricant).
3. Find a comfortable position. Insert the cup by sitting on the toilet, standing, or squatting position.
4. Fold the menstrual cup so that the wide opening of the menstrual cup is made smaller for insertion. There are several ways to fold (Fig 4)

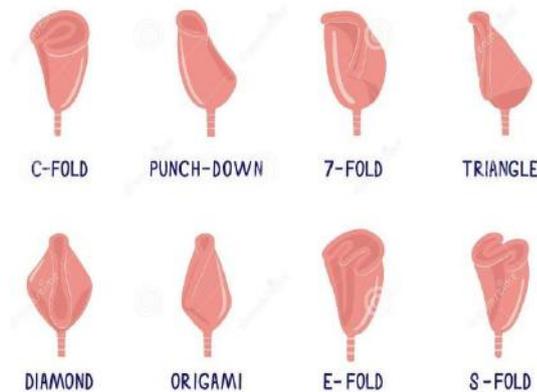


Fig 4 : Menstrual cup folding methods

4. STEPS

1. Wash hands thoroughly.
2. Apply water or a water-based lubricant to the rim of the cup.
3. Tightly fold the menstrual cup in half, holding it in one hand with the rim facing up.
4. Insert the cup, rim up, into vagina like a tampon without an applicator. It should sit a few inches below the cervix.
5. Once the cup is inside the vagina, rotate it. It will spring open to create an airtight seal that stops leaks.

If inserted the cup correctly one can able to move, jump, sit, stand, and do other everyday activities without falling out of menstrual cup. If any trouble to insert the cup, consult with a gynecologist.

5. REMOVAL OF MENSTRUAL CUP :

A menstrual cup can be wear for 6 to 12 hours, depending on the amount of flow (normal or heavy flow). This means a cup can be used for overnight protection. Always remove the menstrual cup by the 12-hour mark. If it becomes full before then, empty it ahead of schedule to avoid leaks.

To take out a menstrual cup, just follow these steps:

1. Wash hands thoroughly.
2. Place your index finger and thumb into your vagina. Pull the stem of the cup gently until you can reach the base.
3. Pinch the base to release the seal and pull down to remove the cup.
4. Once it's out, empty the cup into the sink or toilet. Then, rinse it out with clean water, and use a mild, oil-free, fragrance-free soap to give it a quick clean.
5. Once it's clean, you can reinsert the cup

6. CUP AFTERCARE :

Reusable menstrual cups are durable and can last for 6 months to 10 years with proper care. Menstrual cup should be emptied at least twice a day. To sanitize the cup after period is over, rinse it thoroughly, then boil it for a few minutes. After that, set it aside to completely cool down and dry off.

7. STORAGE OF MENSTRUAL CUP :

Most cups will come with a bag or pouch to store it in when it is not in use. Store the pouch in a cold, dry location where the cup can properly dry out before your next use.

8. ADVANTAGES :

A menstrual cup

- is affordable
- is safer than tampons
- holds more blood than other sanitary products
- is better for the environment than pads or tampons
- can't be felt during sex (some brands)
- can be worn with an IUD

9. DISADVANTAGES

A menstrual cup

- can be messy
- may be hard to insert or remove
- may be tough to find the right fit
- may cause an allergic reaction
- may cause vaginal irritation

10. RISKS OF MENSTRUAL CUPS

The biggest risk with menstrual cups is mild irritation or discomfort. More substantial risks like infection or TSS are rare. It's also important to discuss your options with a gynecologist if:

- allergic to rubber or latex
- use an intrauterine device (IUD) for birth control — sometimes it's necessary to shorten the string attached to the IUD so that it is difficult to pull it out when removing a menstrual cup
- History of TSS
- Had any gynecological surgery, given birth, or had a miscarriage
- have a vaginal infection

11. DISPOSAL OF A MENSTRUAL CUP

A silicone menstrual cup can burn it to ash. Medical grade silicone is derived from silica, which is found in sand. Silicone is made through a chemical process but from natural materials, so the ash left behind isn't harmful to the environment.

12. CONCLUSION:

Menstrual cups are reusable sanitary cups which are made of medical grade silicon, latex. The cups can be reused for about 10 years, although they have a higher one-time investment in comparison to other sanitary products. They are more environmental friendly also.

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