

Working With Your Period



This fact sheet will look at what to do if you have your period but want to keep working and how to avoid bloody accidents or clients realising that you have your period.

What are you going to be reading about?...

- Vaginal inserts
- How to insert a sponge
- Taking a sponge out with one finger
- Taking a sponge out with two fingers
- What to do if you have problems getting a sponge out
- What to avoid doing if you're having trouble getting your sponge out
- Will a client feel the sponge?
- Can you sleep with a sponge in?
- Can you go to the toilet without removing the sponge?
- Can you re-use a sponge?
- What if you don't want to use an insert?
- Other tricks we use to hide our periods from our clients
- What happens if my client finds out I have my periods?
- A note on manufactured sponges
- Sexual health & HIV clinics, Hospitals

Vaginal inserts

You can insert materials into your body to stop blood appearing on condoms and sheets including:

Manufactured sponges - You may have heard of Beppy Sponges. This is one brand of a type of sterile sponge made in factories and individually wrapped for SINGLE USE.

There are different brands (Beppy, Sax, Hygenica, etc.) and they can come in different shapes and sizes and some come already lubricated for easier insertion. Beppy sponges are a little bit bigger than a golf ball and are a soft round sponge, so they adapt to the contours of your body when you're having sex.

They have a high absorption rate and can be inserted for up to eight hours at a time. Depending on how heavily you're bleeding, you may not have to swap them between clients.

However, if you have extremely heavy periods, you may need to insert them at the last minute and change them as soon as you can to ensure you don't bleed through them.

Sponges are not effective for all sex workers, or at all times of your period. Some sex workers report that if they bleed large clots, these don't get absorbed into the sponge; rather, the clots sit on the outside surface of the sponge.

You can only buy these sponges online, and Respect Inc and some NSPs (needle and syringe programs) stock them. Sterile manufactured sponges are the inserts most sex workers use (and the ones Respect Inc recommends for use).



Sea sponges - Sea sponges are the sponges you purchase in a chemist or supermarket.

They aren't sterile and may have bits of grit, sand and seashells in them from the ocean. This debris can scratch your vagina, leave bits inside and scratch or tear the condom if it comes in contact with the seashells or grit.

For these reasons, it is not recommended that you use them. Some of these sponges come packaged in plastic wrap; however, they are not sterile. Lots of older sex workers have used sea sponges with no ill effect, but there are better, safer alternatives available these days.



Diaphragm - These are initially fitted by your doctor. They are dome-shaped rubber caps that are fitted inside your vagina and cover the cervix, providing a barrier between the sperm, the cervix and the egg.

You can insert a diaphragm yourself and only have to wear it when you need it; however, if you use it when you have your period, you'll need to change it every four hours.

They do have a few disadvantages, including the fact that some people may have an allergy to rubber and spermicide, there can be slippage or discomfort if they're not fitted properly, or if you put on, or lose, 5kg you'll need to get a new one fitted.

Finally, it can cause urinary tract infections. Many doctors prefer sex workers not use diaphragms (especially if they have not had children) because of the increased risk of infection.



Tampons - Some workers unroll a tampon so it looks like a blanket of cotton wool and then insert this into their vagina with their finger. It's not advisable to use tampons, because once unravelled the cotton wool can shed pieces of cotton that can become lodged in the vagina and cause infection. Because the cotton wool has no shape or body, it can also be pushed up under the cervix, making it difficult to get out.

Douche - While some workers use water to flush themselves out, this is not recommended because it can upset the pH balance of your vagina and there's a good chance you will continue to bleed onto the sheets and condom.

Household Sponge - Cut-up bits of cleaning sponges are also not recommended. They aren't sterile, not cut to fit your vagina and, if rough, can damage the inside of your vagina or shred a condom. They may also contain chemical colouring.

How to insert a sponge

Wash your hands with soap and water



Take the sponge out of its packaging. If the sponge did not come in any packaging assume it's not sterile



Wet the sponge with water if you haven't purchased a lubricated sponge.



Squeeze all of the liquid out of the sponge. If you don't, it will leave less room for the blood to be drawn into.



Be careful if you want to lubricate it with lube you use for sex, because it can make the sponge slippery so it's harder to get your finger around when you want to get it out. Lube can also create a barrier to the blood even though it is water-soluble.



Squeeze the sponge to make it a little smaller and insert it like you would a tampon. Squat down, lift one leg up or get into the usual position you use when inserting a normal tampon.



Push it up inside your vagina to the same point you would a tampon and try and make it sit across your cervix so no blood is able to seep down the sides or underneath the sponge.

Take your fingers out and wash your hands.



Taking a sponge out with one finger

Squat down or lift one leg up and try and get into the same position you were in when inserting the sponge.

Slowly insert your finger inside yourself, being really careful not to scratch the insides of your vagina.

Hook your middle finger around the side of the sponge to scoop it out.



Taking a sponge out with two fingers

Use your fingers as a pair of tweezers by slowly inserting your middle finger and finger next to your thumb. Grab the edge of the sponge with both fingers and slowly pull it out.



What to do if you have problems getting a sponge out

If you're having problems reaching it or it's slippery and you can't get a firm hold of it, squat down because this changes the angle in which your cervix is sitting and makes it easier to get a firm hold of the sponge.

Try to relax; sometimes sponges are hard to remove and if you are tense then you will tighten up and this will make it harder.

Bear down with your muscles and this will help to push it out of your body. Sometimes the sponge will be pushed up behind the cervix and squatting can help reach that area.

Have a bath to soak the sponge in water. This will make the sponge heavier and bigger, making it easier to get hold of.

Some ladies tie a piece of dental floss around the sponge and push the end of the floss just up inside their bodies. If you do this, be careful that it doesn't rip the sponge when you pull on it and doesn't slip off.

The last thing you need is dental floss or bits of sponge floating around inside your body.

The most important thing to remember when either inserting or getting a sponge out is to relax your muscles so they aren't gripping the sponge.

What to avoid doing if you're having trouble getting your sponge out

Don't get a partner or someone else to stick their fingers inside you to scoop it out, because they won't be able to feel if they are scratching the inside of your vagina, which can lead to infections.

Don't insert implements like tweezers inside your body. This can cause tears and scratching to your vagina.

Don't panic, it's not going anywhere. Your cervix opening is much too small to fit a sponge through it.

Will a client feel the sponge?

Some clients report being able to feel the sponges inside you, but rather than thinking it's a sponge they assume they are so deep inside you that their dick is banging on your cervix.

This more often than not turns them on so it's not a bad thing.

Check the condom you're using more often if you're using a sponge because it can bang on the sponge and cause scratches on it, which can lead to the condom breaking.

If you are using one in your personal life, some sex workers have reported their partners can feel it and it can scratch the outside of their dicks, causing urinary tract infections.

Can you sleep with a sponge in?

Yes you can sleep with a sponge in, so overnight bookings are not out of the question.

Can you go to the toilet without removing the sponge?

Yes you can, because the vagina, urethra and anus all have their own openings and tubing so the sponge does not come in contact with any of your other body fluids when you go to the toilet.

Can you re-use a sponge?

It's probably best to think of sponges as one-use wonders. If you apply bleach, Dettol, Betadene or other cleaning products to a sponge and don't rinse it well enough it can harm the lining of your vagina, causing infection and easier access for STIs.

If you leave the sponge for a while before disinfecting it you can never be sure if you have killed off all the bacteria or fungal spores that could be lurking inside it just waiting for a warm moist place to start growing again. If you boil them, they'll shrink so small, they'll be useless.

What if you don't want to use an insert?

Many ladies take the days on which they have their periods off to rest. Other options include having an Implanon Rod inserted or Depro-Provera injections. Some women find that these methods stop their periods; however, others find that they cause unpredictable spotting and can make periods heavier and more frequent.

Some ladies may take a contraceptive pill and miss taking the sugar pills so they never have a period. If this is an option you're going to take, it's important to discuss this with your doctor or sexual health clinic first.

Other tricks we use to hide our periods from our clients

Colored condoms - many workers use black condoms to hide any blood that may leak onto the condom. Other coloured condoms can be used, but only black condoms will completely mask any blood.

Dark sheets - you can try and use dark coloured sheets to hide any marks left on the sheets. Remember to use a dark pillowcase as well, because blood can get onto your hands, which you may then place on a pillowcase.

Fingering - avoid allowing your clients to touch your vagina with their fingers and especially avoid allowing their fingers inside you because they may feel or grab the sponge and get blood on their fingers.

Removing the condom - jump off the client as soon as you've finished bonking, grab a tissue and take the condom off before he has time to look down or touch it. Make sure you wipe down his balls, inner thighs and pubic area with a tissue and wet wipe if you have one to get rid of any blood that may be on that area.

Just because there isn't any blood on the condom doesn't mean there won't be any blood on his other genitals. If you're on white sheets and get your periods unexpectedly, try and sit or lie down on the blood spot and get your client to go to the bathroom for a shower or ask him to go and get you a drink (if you trust him in your fridge).

You can also try and redirect your client out of the room and away from the bloody sheets by telling him you feel like being really devious and want to bonk him bent over the kitchen sink or on the lounge.

Tell him to go to the lounge and sit on it and wait while you just pop into the bathroom to freshen up and put some new sexy lingerie on. While in the bathroom, wash any blood off yourself, insert a sponge and put new lingerie on if you promised it.

What happened if my client finds out I have my periods?

Most clients have had wives or girlfriends and have experience of a woman getting her periods unexpectedly and aren't horrified if you get some blood on them, the condom or the sheets.

Clients for the most part understand and are forgiving, so say you're sorry, that you didn't expect it to happen and you'll make it up to them next time they come to visit by giving them extra large smiles throughout the booking.

If they get upset at you, you can always offer to give them some money back, offer to switch to just doing a massage service for them and that you will give them the hand job of a lifetime. Some clients may even be turned on by you having your period and you could charge extra for it if you find a client who is into this fetish.

A note on manufactured sponges

Beppy and other manufactured sponges are sold as cosmetic sponges and do not have TGA (therapeutic goods approval) to be used as an internal tampon device in Australia. This means they have not been tested to verify they won't cause any harm if you use them as a tampon sponge. Respect Inc supplies these sponges; however, we supply them based on harm reduction principles and believe if you're going to insert a sponge inside your body, we should be able to provide sponges in the most hygienic form possible.

Places to go if you need a sexual health check or want to discuss medical issues further **Sexual health & HIV clinics**

AIDS Medical Unit Brisbane
07 3837 5622 (existing client or your partners is, only)
Bamaga Sexual Health Clinic
07 4090 4219
Brisbane Sexual Health Clinic
07 3837 5611
Bundaberg Health Clinic (Q Clinic)
07 4150 2754
Cairns Sexual Health Clinic (The Dolls House)
07 4050 6205
Cape York Health Service District Program
07 4082 3651
Gold Coast Sexual Health Service (Miami)
07 5576 9033
Ipswich Sexual Health Service (S.H.op101)
07 3817 2428
Mackay Sexual Health and Sexual Assault Service
07 4968 3919
Mt Isa Sexual Health Services
07 4744 4805
Palm Island Sexual Health Service
07 4752 5100
Redcliffe/Caboolture Sexual Health and HIV Service
07 3897 6300
Rockhampton Sexual Health and HIV Service
07 4920 5555
Sunshine Coast – Wide Bay Sexual Health & HIV Service
07 5470 5244

Thursday Island – Men's and Women's Health
07 4069 0413
Toowoomba (Kobi House)
07 4616 6446
Townsville Sexual Health Unit
07 4778 9600
Weipa Sexual Health Program
07 4090 6206
Woolloongabba Princess Alexandra Sexual Health (PASH or PA)
07 3240 5881

Disclaimer:

All material in this fact sheet is provided for your information only and may not be construed as legal, medical or health advice or instruction.

Respect Inc contacts:

Brisbane Office

28 Mein Street
Spring Hill QLD 4000
07 3835 1111 (phone)
07 3835 1122 (fax)

Gold Coast

4 Bay Street
Southport QLD 4215
07 5657 0857 (phone)
07 5564 0929 (fax)

Cairns Office

7/24 Florence Street
Cairns City QLD 4870
07 4051 5009 (phone)
07 4051 0009 (fax)

Townsville Office

118a Charters Towers Road
Hermit Park Townsville QLD 4812
07 4724 4853 (phone)
07 4724 1122 (fax)

www.respectqld.org.au
info@respectqld.org.au