



SWIMMING & PERIODS

MEMBER RESOURCE DOCUMENT

Introduction

This document has been put together with some resources and advice to help athletes navigate and manage their periods in general but also alongside swimming! It is possible to train and compete during your period, but this may be easier or more challenging.

Importance of periods & tracking

Having a period is healthy, it's a sign your body is healthy and well. When you initially start having periods you may find they are irregular, this is natural as your body finds its rhythm. Your period may be earlier or later than normal if training is more intense (training camps) or during a break from training (Summer), stress (exams), illness etc. If you miss a period, it can indicate something is up, if you miss 3 in a row you should visit a doctor. If you haven't started your period by the time you turn 16yrs it may be worth visiting the doctor to check everything is ok.

Tracking your period can help in a number of ways, apart from knowing when to expect it! Knowing where you are in your cycle and keeping a note of symptoms can help to spot patterns as well as anything unusual. Below are two examples of tracking apps but they are many out there, both enable you to track period & symptoms and include advice during the different stages of your cycle:

- Fitr women & Flo

Videos from Athletes

- [DRP 2021 Aimee Willmott: Puberty, Periods & Periodisation](#) [DRP | Puberty, Periods & Periodisation - Aimee Willmott \(youtube.com\)](#)
Aimee represented both England & GB in swimming, winning gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games & 2016 Olympic finalist.
- [Junior Academy 2022 Hannah Miley: Being a Female Athlete](#) [Junior Academy: Being a Female Athlete, with Hannah Miley \(youtube.com\)](#)
Hannah represented both Scotland & GB in swimming, winning gold at the 2010 & 2014 Commonwealth Games, Olympic finalist & 2012 World Short Course 400 IM Champion

Period Products

There are a variety of products out there so here is some information on the different products out there and what is useful for when you are in the water. Scotland are trying to reduce barriers to period products so you may find free products in toilets & bathrooms in gyms, schools etc.

Pads These come in a few different forms. Pads are not designed to be used in the water. Check out the other products below for training/ competitions:

- **Disposable** Peel these out the packet and stick them to your underwear. They should be changed every 4-8hrs depending on your flow
- **Reusable** These can be rinsed under cold water, washed & dried and then ready to use again. They often come with a small bag to store clean/ used ones as you are out and about. They are often secured by wrapping the wings around your underwear and a button to hold them in place.
- **Sizes** May depend on your flow or pant size, it may take some trial and error to find the one that is most comfortable and practical for you
- **'wings'** Think of these as side straps for your pad to hold it in place and keep it more secure. Often found on pads designed to support heavier flows to reduce leaks.
- **'Night'** Designed to be changed less often so you can get an uninterrupted night

Tampons These also come in a couple of different forms - all disposable. Suitable to be worn when swimming. Should be changed every 4-8hrs.

- Applicator
- Non-Applicator
- Sizes



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Menstrual (Moon) Cup - Suitable for use whilst swimming. Reusable Silicone Cup generally holds a couple of tampons worth of blood and therefore designed to be changed less often. Empty contents down the toilet either rinse or wipe with toilet paper and re-insert. In between uses it will need to be sterilised – different cups have different suggestions on how to do this, generally in a pan with boiling water for 5-7mins.

- **Sizes** Some Cups come in different sizes, but they will provide details on how to pick the right size (generally for teens pick the smaller size to start with)

Period Pants/ Swimwear - Another alternative with the swimwear suitable for swimming. Reusable underwear or swimwear. They do vary in how much blood they can hold; the underwear can be used in conjunction with pads & tampons/ cups to provide extra protection and prevent leaks. Swimwear can be swimsuits or bikini bottoms, can also be used in conjunction with tampons/cups.

Scottish Swimming have allowed period wear in competition under race suits (more than one swimsuit in competition is still not allowed in any other circumstance). Swimmers may find it easier to wear the bikini bottoms under the tighter race suits.

- [Teen Period Swimwear | Bikinis & One-Pieces | Modibodi UK](#)
- [Period Swimwear for Teens - UV50+ Sun Protection | WUKA](#)
- [Products – The Period People](#) (Appears to be adult sizing only)
- [Period Swimwear for Teens | Ruby Love's leak-proof technology](#) (American Company, will need shipping – has most options)

Symptoms

Whilst some days you may feel amazing some days you might not. During your menstrual cycle you may experience some of following, and we have pulled together some things that can reduce the symptoms.

- **Cramps** (caused by inflammation as the uterus sheds its lining)
 - Light exercise can help like yoga, walking and steady swimming.
 - Alternating 10 Glute Bridges & 10 Birddogs (opp. elbow to knee in tabletop) can reduce cramping by increasing the blood flow around the area and help to flush the prostaglandins causing the contractions
 - Hot Water Bottle or Cold Compress on the lower stomach can help relax the muscles/ relieve some of the inflammation
 - Nutrition – Stay hydrated, blood is a fluid! Fruit & Veg with high anti-oxidants can help to reduce inflammation, think berries, cherries & walnuts. Avoid salty, fried, fatty foods.
 - Medication (Ibuprofen) – make sure to check with your parents, if/when it is safe to take it. Ibuprofen is an anti-inflammatory that can help to reduce period cramps.
- **Feeling weak/ tired** (likely due to the loss of iron in your period, particularly if it's heavy)
 - Nutrition – Include foods rich in Iron (red meat, lentils, spinach) & vitamin C (Peppers, Berries) to replace the Iron lost. Vitamin C helps with the absorption of Iron. Avoid tea, coffee, cocoa & alcohol as these can prevent iron & vitamin c absorption.
 - Nutrition – Make sure you are eating enough! You may feel hungrier in the week before and the week during your period. This is because your body is using more fuel to prepare and deliver your period. Listen to your body.
 - Sleep – sometimes it may be challenging but allow your body time to rest, try to make the best sleep environment possible to ensure you get a good night's sleep. During longer competitions like SNAGs napping between sessions may help your body recover better
- **Emotions** – I've pulled them all together here, irritable, angry, sad. Because your hormones are rising and falling it can be harder to regulate our emotions. Reducing the amount of stress your body is under can help – Nutrition, Sleep & Exercise.



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Other links with useful information

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pre-menstrual-syndrome/>
- [A gynaecologist busts nine common myths about tampons \(tampax.co.uk\)](https://www.tampax.co.uk/gynaecologist-busts-nine-common-myths-about-tampons)
- [Tips and Advice for Girls and Parents \(always.co.uk\)](https://www.always.co.uk/tips-advice-for-girls-and-parents)