# Reusable Menstrual Pads (RUMPS) Training Manual

2012

Created for Primary Schools by Peace Corps Volunteers

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Introduction

What are reusable menstrual pads?
Reusable menstrual pads are cloth sanitary pads that can be made by hand and used over and over again for up to one year. After using, the pad is washed and dried thoroughly and is ready to be used again. The pads consist of the pad itself, liners for absorbing flow, and wings with a button to secure around the knickers. The pads are made out of cotton materials such as school uniform fabric, t-shirts, baby blankets, bed sheets, etc. The liners are made with towels, socks, washcloths, fleece, or any other absorbent material. Materials can be new or used. At least two pads and two liners should be made. For women with a heavy flow or a long menstrual period, more or thicker liners can be made.

Why reusable menstrual pads?
Reusable menstrual pads are inexpensive to make. For a set of pads, made out of new materials that last a year the cost is approximately 1,500 UGX. For a set of pads made out of used materials, the cost is even less.

Many young girls whose parents cannot afford the store bought sanitary pads will resort to the use of unsanitary or uncomfortable items that do not prevent leaks such as old rags, toilet paper, newspaper, banana leaves, etc. These items can cause infections and do not have good leak protection. Therefore, girls often stay home during their menstrual period to avoid any embarrassment. They are staying home for about a week per month, three weeks per term, and about nine weeks each year. Missing this much school puts them behind in their class. The reusable pads are a low cost solution to allow girls to attend school during their menstrual period.

Environmentally, reusable menstrual pads are better to use than disposable store bought sanitary pads. Because disposable pads take a long time to decompose, if they are thrown down the latrine, the latrine will fill up much faster than normal. Since there is already a lack of latrines in the area, the use of disposable pads is just making the problem worse. They are filling up latrines faster than normal making it necessary to build more which communities may not be able to afford.

The Reusable Menstrual Pads Program
The reusable menstrual pad program consists of a brief presentation about menstruation, a question session, step-by-step instructions to sew RUMPS, time for each girl to make her own pad and finally cleaning instructions.

The presentation is about an hour and focuses on the menstrual cycle, female reproductive body parts and HIV/AIDS. During the presentation, the presenter walks through each phase of the menstrual cycle discussing the functions of the relevant body parts. Following the presentation, there is about thirty minutes or more for questions where the girls can ask about
anything pertaining to female hygiene, the menstrual cycle, and any other issues the girls may face today.

When the presentation and questions conclude, it is time to begin making the reusable menstrual pad. First, the presenter will walk through the construction of the pad piece by piece. Materials are then handed out to each girl and the pad making begins. Each girl is asked to contribute a small portion of money in order to maintain ownership of the pad as well as supplement the cost of the materials for the pad making. The kits will be bought for 300UGX each. The girls are also taught about other materials they can use that they may already have at home. Each girl will make a pad kit by hand to take home and use on her own. The program finishes by discussing the proper way to clean the pad and keep ourselves healthy and clean. It is important to stress how to clean the pad properly so the girls do not get infections later.

**Menstrual Health and Hygiene**

**Female Reproductive System**  
The female reproductive system can be difficult for any young girl to understand because it is mostly internal. For a frame of reference, the uterus is about the size of a closed fist and sits just below the navel.

**Ovary**  
A woman has two ovaries, one on each side of the uterus. This is where the eggs are stored. Women are born with all of their eggs already in their ovaries. During ovulation, one egg will be released from one ovary into the fallopian tube. If a man’s sperm joins the egg, it can develop into a baby.

**Fallopian Tube**  
There are two fallopian tubes; one on each side of the uterus. They connect the ovaries to the uterus. When an ovary releases an egg, it travels through the fallopian tube and to the uterus. This journey takes about 5 days. Fertilization occurs in the fallopian tube.
**Uterus**
The uterus is a muscular organ that serves as the womb for the baby. It sits very low in the torso. This is where the baby grows when a woman is pregnant and where the blood comes from when she is menstruating. During childbirth, the uterus’s muscles help push the baby through the vagina.

**Cervix**
The cervix is a small opening in the uterus into the vagina. Sperm can enter the uterus through this opening but protects against other things such as a man’s penis. This is the opening through which the baby leaves the uterus during childbirth. The opening dilates up to 10 centimetres during childbirth to allow the baby to pass through.

**Vagina**
The vagina connects the uterus to the outside of the body. It receives the penis during intercourse. This is where the blood leaves the body during the MP and also where the baby finally leaves the body during childbirth. It is made up of a special skin that can stretch during sexual intercourse and childbirth. It creates a fluid to protect against infection and keep itself clean.

**Hymen**
The hymen is a thin piece of skin just inside the vaginal opening. It may stretch or tear and bleed a little due to hard work, sports, or other activities. This can also happen when a woman has sex for the first time. Every woman’s hymen is different and some may not have one at all. The hymen is not a woman’s virginity.

When talking about virginity it is necessary to keep in mind that there are two kinds. There is the physical virginity of your body that you lose when you have sexual intercourse for the first time. There is also the spiritual/mental virginity sometimes referred to as second virginity. Second virginity is important because in many areas girls are raped, molested, or defiled. In these situations the girls had no choice and while they may have lost their physical virginity, they can still remain virgins in their hearts.

**Clitoris**
The clitoris is small and shaped like a flower bud. It is the part of the vulva that is most sensitive to touch. Rubbing it and the area around it can make a woman sexually excited and cause climax.

**Vulva**
The vulva is all the sexual parts seen between a woman’s legs.

**The Menstrual Cycle**
A cycle is something that happens over and over again. Once one cycle has finished, another must begin. The menstrual cycle is the process of preparing a woman’s body for pregnancy each month; however, if the woman’s egg is not fertilized, she will experience menstruation, a
woman’s monthly bleeding. Every month, a woman’s body builds a womb in the uterus for the baby that may grow there. Menstruation is the shedding of this uterine lining when she does not become pregnant.

The average menstrual cycle occurs every 28 days. However, not every female is the same. Some menstrual cycles can last only 21 days while others can last up to 45 days. The length of menstruation is usually 3-6 days. Some women can have a heavy flow, while another’s may be lighter. Each woman is different and all of these differences can be attributed to her hormones and other environmental factors, such as nutrition, stress and exercise. If these environmental factors change suddenly, it may affect her menstrual cycle. This is normal, and we are all unique!

*Note: This is for a 28-day cycle. The days and duration of phases will vary for a shorter or longer cycle. Every woman is different.*

There are 4 phases of the menstrual cycle:

**Phase 1: Menses/Menstruation Period/MP (Bleeding time): Days 1-5**
The MP, or bleeding time, marks the beginning of the menstrual cycle. The first day of monthly bleeding marks day one of the cycle. It typically lasts from day 1 to day 5. The length of the MP is different for each female. The time of bleeding can vary from 2 to 7 days. Since fertilization of the egg did NOT occur, the uterus lining is not needed anymore and thus breaks down and the blood and tissues from it come out through the vagina. The uterus contracts in order to push the lining out which can cause some cramping. During her MP, every woman bleeds different amounts for different lengths of time. Some get pains and all women get their MPs at different ages. Due to a hormonal imbalance, young girls may have irregular periods. They may get their period but then not get it for another 3 months. They may have it two times in one month but
then not get it for another 6 months. This is normal for young girls! It may take some time before their cycle is balanced.

To reduce pains during the MP: Take Panadol, a muscle relaxer. Place a washcloth soaked in hot water where the pains are felt. Avoid chocolate, sweets, soda, coffee and tea. Drink lots of water. Do some exercises such as walking.

**Phase 2: Follicular Phase: Days 6 - 10**
This phase happens just after the menstrual bleeding has stopped. The uterus lining is very thin because the tissues and blood have just been pushed out from the body. From day 6 to day 10, the egg begins to grow inside the ovary and will continue to grow until it reaches maturity. The uterus lining also begins to thicken again.

**Phase 3: Ovulation: Days 11 - 18**
The ovulation phase is when the egg is released from the ovary and begins its journey through the fallopian tube to the uterus. The egg is typically released on day 14. Once released, it will take the egg about 5 days to travel through the fallopian tube to the uterus. The egg travels slowly through the fallopian tube because it is waiting for the sperm so they can join together. Sperm can stay in the fallopian tubes for up to 7 days waiting for an egg. If a sperm comes when the egg is the fallopian tube, the woman can become pregnant.

**Phase 4: Secretory Phase: Days 19 - 28**
The secretory phase is from day 19 until day 28. During this phase, the body prepares for implantation by creating secretions, or juices, that will help support an embryo until the placenta is completely formed. They will continue to be secreted up until the beginning of the MP. The egg has now reached the uterus in this phase and the lining has reached its maximum size. If fertilization did NOT occur, the egg will not implant in the uterus, and the secretion production will drop dramatically and the uterus will begins working to push out the lining because the woman does not need it. Cramping also occurs in this phase because the muscles of the uterus are working hard to push out the lining.

**Vaginal Infections**
Throughout the menstrual cycle, the vagina produces something called vaginal fluid, which is meant to keep the vagina clean. Right before the MP, the body produces more of the fluid. The fluid is usually thick after the MP and thin in the middle of the cycle. The fluid is generally clear or white in colour. This is completely normal. It is common for women to experience vaginal infections in Uganda due to the hot and humid environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaginal Infection</th>
<th>Signs and Symptoms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Candida (Yeast Infection)</td>
<td>• Very thick, white vaginal fluid that smells bad</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Redness, itching, burning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Painful urination</td>
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To avoid infections, always put on clean, dry knickers, and avoid the use of wet towels or of sharing towels. Also, always use condoms if not in a monogamous relationship or abstain if you are young! If you have any of these symptoms, it is very important to get treatment right away. Without treatment, the infection can travel up the vagina and possibly to the uterus causing damage. For treatment, normally a woman will only have to take some tablets, which are not so expensive. Some women may get embarrassed to seek treatment because they can be caused by sexual activity; however, these infections are typically caused by a variety of environmental factors unrelated to sex.

**Puberty**

During puberty, menstruation is only one of the many changes young girls experience. All changes that occur during puberty are caused by hormones, a chemical substance that is carried through the bloodstream to regulate the activity of certain organs. Other changes include:

- Breast growth
- Widening of hips
- Increased sweating and body odour
- Growth of pubic hair and armpit hair
- Acne
- Hormonal increase, which can result in mood swings

The average age to begin menstruation is 12 years old, but it can begin any time between 9-16 years old. It is important to note that even if a girl begins menstruating, it does not mean she is ready to be pregnant. Girls begin to menstruate in order to practice preparing the body for pregnancy, but her body is still developing for this process. Many girls that get pregnant young will experience difficulties and complications in childbirth due to narrow hips, which do not reach their maximum size until the age of 18. Furthermore, it may take years for her menstrual cycle to become “regular,” or predictable, although some women may never experience regularity naturally. Therefore, younger girls cannot rely on “standard days method” as a proper method of birth control.
HIV/AIDS

A healthy person depends on their immune system to protect them from diseases; however, HIV weakens the body’s immune system, causing the body to be susceptible to opportunistic infections. HIV stands for “Human Immunodeficiency Virus.” Like all viruses, HIV is a small organism that upon infecting a person makes copies of itself causing damage to cells.

All humans have helper T cells that help our bodies identify and defend itself against bacteria, parasites and viruses. HIV attacks and destroys these cells, leaving the body with a disabled immune system. Eventually, the patient will develop AIDS, “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome,” which is a group of diseases caused by HIV. AIDS is the final stage of HIV that will end in death.

HIV Transmission

HIV can only be contracted in very specific ways. First, a person must be in direct contact with one of four main body fluids that transmit HIV. They are blood, semen (also in pre-ejaculate), vaginal fluids, and breast milk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluids That <strong>DO</strong> Transmit HIV</th>
<th>Fluids That <strong>DO NOT</strong> Transmit HIV</th>
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<tr>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>Saliva</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semen</td>
<td>Sweat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaginal Fluids</td>
<td>Tears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast Milk</td>
<td>Urine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nasal mucus</td>
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To get infected, these four fluids need a portal of entry or a door into the body. A portal of entry is the way that HIV enters the body. This can be through a sore, a cut, or an opening in the skin or through the mucous membrane located in the vagina, the tip of the penis, the anus, the mouth, the eyes, or the nose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doors Into the Body</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sore on the body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cut on the body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opening in the skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tip of the penis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nose</td>
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To discover whether any given activity can transmit HIV, ask yourself the following two questions:

1. What is the fluid?
2. Where is the door?

If both answers include one of the 4 mentioned fluids and one of the doors, the activity can transmit HIV.

Activities that **CAN** transmit HIV:
- Vaginal sex
- Direct blood transfusion of untested blood
- Sharing needles
- Contact with blood of an infected person
- Breastfeeding
- Mother to infant during delivery
- Mother to infant during pregnancy
- Exchange of blood
- Contact with semen
- Contact with vaginal fluid

It is important to remember to value and care for people with HIV! We should not stigmatize HIV positive patients for their status because everyone is susceptible. They need love and attention just like you.

Activities that **CANNOT** transmit HIV:
- Being near a person with HIV
- Sharing cups with a person with HIV
- Hugging a person with HIV when blood is not present
- Kissing a person with HIV when blood is not present
- Proper use of condom during sex
- Shaking hands with a person with HIV

**Women and HIV/AIDS**
Women are especially vulnerable to HIV infection for a variety of reasons.

**Biological Risk Factors**
- Women receive more amounts of possibly infected fluids during sex
- Women have a surface area of mucous membrane in the vagina that is larger than that of a man’s penis
- Very young women have more risk of infection during sex both because the cells in the vagina in underdeveloped women are more likely to receive the virus, and because tearing may cause bleeding which increases the risk of infection
- If a woman has been circumcised or uses natural substances to dry out the vagina, the smaller or drier area may rupture more easily during sex
Cultural Risk Factors

- Taboos related to speaking about sex
- Gender roles that do not allow women to participate in sexual or reproductive decisions
- Girls’ initiation rites that could include female circumcision or young girls’ sexual initiation by an older male relative
- In some cultures, men’s preference for dry sex
- Marriage rites that give women a property value or imply male ownership of their wives
- Extreme poverty that encourages the exchange of sex for money, school fees, or food
- Common myths, such as believing that a man can cure AIDS by sleeping with a virgin or that condoms either do not work or are actually contaminated with the virus

HIV Prevention

Although HIV/AIDS is a problem, we all have the power to do something about it.

In order to prevent HIV transmission through sexual contact, we can use the ABC’s:

Abstain: Do not have sex.

Be Faithful: Only have one sexual partner, with whom you have gone for HIV and STDs testing.

Condom Use: Condoms are 95% effective, if used properly. Using a condom during intercourse is the only known contraceptive that can help prevent the transmission of the HIV during sex.

The only method of preventing STDs, HIV/AIDS and pregnancy that works every time is abstinence.

A blood test is the only certain method to check for HIV, regardless of the symptoms and signs. It is recommended to get tested with your partner so you can discuss the results together with professional help. If someone is HIV positive, it is important they are aware of their status. They need to start taking ARVs immediately, improve their nutrition, drink clean water and sleep under a mosquito net. ARVs can significantly prolong a patient’s life, but only if taken properly.

In order to prevent HIV transmission unrelated to sexual relations:

- If you are HIV positive, avoid pregnancy
- Do not share needles
- Do not share razors
- Avoid contact of another’s blood
- Correct myths!

Common myths about HIV/AIDS and their truths:

- You can be cured of AIDS by having sex with a virgin
  *There is no cure for AIDS!*
- Since everyone dies of AIDS, it is better not to know if you have it
  *If you don’t know if you have AIDS, you can spread it to others*
- People in the United States have access to medicines that can cure AIDS
There is no cure for AIDS

- No one has AIDS in Uganda
  
  *About 7% of the population has AIDS in Uganda*
- Traditional healers (or religious leaders) in Uganda have cured AIDS

  *There is no cure for AIDS*

- If you wash after sex you will not get HIV

  *HIV transmission would have occurred already*
- If you share a drinking cup with a person with HIV, you can get HIV

  *HIV is not present in saliva*
- If you take Panandol after sex you will not get HIV

  *ARVs, when taken within 72 hours of exposure, are the only medication that can prevent HIV transmission*

- Condoms were made to reduce the population of Africans

  *Condoms were invented over 200 years ago for family planning purposes of Europeans. Now they are used worldwide*

- Insects, like mosquitoes and bed bugs, can transmit HIV

  *HIV is a virus of humans, therefore insects cannot carry the virus*
- HIV can be transmitted by sharing facilities, such as toilets, glasses and bed sheets

  *HIV is only transmitted when those four fluids enter a “door.” Generally those fluids will not be present in these activities, therefore they are harmless; however, beware in any situations when blood is present.*

- HIV can be transmitted by bewitching

  *HIV is only transmitted when those four fluids enter a “door”*
- If a person drinks soda before HIV testing, they will always test negative

  *Soda does not affect a person’s blood content*
- Women lose the HIV virus through menstruation.

  *There is no cure for HIV. Once a person has HIV, they will always have it*
The Best Response Game: A Life Skills Activity

Sometimes young people may be pressured into having sex when they don’t want to. In particular, young girls may not know they have the right to refuse especially when it’s an adult who is asking them. It is important for them to know that it’s their body, and they don’t have to have sex if they don’t want to! There are usually certain “pressure lines” others will use to get what they want. If the person being pressured with these lines is not familiar with them, they may end up having sex when they don’t really want. This game will allow young people to become familiar with these lines and also practice assertive ways to respond to them.

List of “Pressure Lines”

1. “Everybody’s doing it.”
2. “If you truly love me, you will have sex with me.”
3. “I know you want to – you’re just afraid.”
4. “Don’t you trust me? Do you think I have AIDS?”
5. “Girls need to have sex. If not they develop rashes.”
6. “We you don’t, someone had sex once before, so what’s the problem now?”
7. “But I have to have it!”
8. “If you don’t have sex with me, I won’t see you anymore.”
9. “Girls need to have sex. Boys give them vitamins (to make them grow).”
10. “Practice makes perfect.”
11. “You can’t get pregnant if you have sex only one time!”
12. “You don’t think I have a disease, do you?”
13. “But I love you. Don’t you love me?”
14. “If you don’t, someone else will!”
15. “Nothing will go wrong. Don’t worry.”
16. “But we’re going to be married anyway. Why not just this once?”
17. “Aren’t you curious?”

*Note: These are suggestions. You may use the ones you want and add others that are not listed.*

Directions

1. Divide the class into small groups.
2. Designate either 3 pupils or bring in other teachers to be judges.
3. Explain that you have a list of “pressure lines” that a person might try to use to get his or her partner to have sex and that they need to practice saying no to them.
4. Read one of the “pressure lines”.
5. The teams have 2 minutes to come up with the best response to the “pressure line” What would you say to refuse if someone used this line on you?
6. The team should agree on the best response and write their idea on a piece of paper.
7. You will time the groups and call out when the time is up.
8. When time is up, go around the group and have one pupil from each group read the line.
9. The judges will have 1 minute to choose the winner. They should award the winning team with 2 points and zero points to the other groups.
10. Write the points on the board and then repeat the process with the next “pressure line.”
11. When you’ve read all the lines you want, add up the scores and announce the winner. You may even give a small prize if you want!
12. Explain that all of the responses are good as long as they are being assertive when saying them.
13. You can have them brainstorm other “pressure lines” they may have heard in their community.

**Family Planning Methods**

Although abstinence is the best choice for our young girls, we must acknowledge that, in reality, some of them are having sex. Therefore, their questions may touch on family planning. Knowledge is power, and we should tell them the truth about the methods available.

According to the 1998 edition of Contraceptive Technology, 85% of women who use no method of family planning will get pregnant in one year. The percent of women who will become pregnant during the first year of perfect use of a "user-controlled" method is as follows:

- Pill pack & Injections, 0.1 -0.5%
- Standard Days Method, 5% (MOONBEADS)
- Male condom, 3%
- Female condom, 5%
- Withdraw 30%

**Hormonal Methods**

It is important to keep in mind that there exist many myths and misconceptions about birth control pills and injections. Many believe that these methods can cause infertility as well as cancer. It is necessary to note that prolonged use of the pill or injections can reduce fertility rates over time but cannot be the cause of infertility. These methods change the level of hormones in the body. They tell the body not to release an egg every month during ovulation. Although initially these plans can have side effects, they typically reduce in three months time with proper usage. The pills will only be effective if taken at the same time every day, regardless if one is planning on having sex on that particular day.

**Standard Days Method**

The standard days method is done by employing moonbeads. Moonbeads are a great natural family planning method. However, they are only effective if your menstrual cycle is between 26 to 32 days. Each bead represents one day in the cycle. The red bead represents the first day of your period. Each day you move a rubber ring to the next bead. The brown beads are days when fertilization is not likely while the white beads are days when it is likely to occur. There is a dark brown bead that makes 26 days and then six more beads if your cycle is longer. You can
get moonbeads at many clinics that offer family planning services. This option is not viable for younger girls because their menstrual cycles are not regular.

**Condoms**
Male condoms are widely available and protect against pregnancy, STDs and HIV. Many young girls believe condoms are tablets or pills to be taken because they are sold at the pharmacy. It is important to describe that a condom is a physical barrier, which covers the penis and blocks sperm from entering the vagina; otherwise, they may be tricked or deceived. When discussing condoms it should be noted that there are instructions for use. Unfortunately, female condoms are not easily found in Uganda.

It is good to stress that any method is only effective when following instructions for use properly.

**Condom Instructions**
1. Check the expiration date.
2. Check that the condom has not been left too long in the sun by making sure there is an air pocket in the wrapper.
3. Open the package carefully.
4. Find out which way the condom rolls out.
5. Pinch the top of the condom to prevent air being trapped.
6. To increase sensation for the man, add a drop of *water-based* lubricant (not any oil product) inside the unrolled condom as you are pinching it.
7. Roll the condom gently down to the base of the erect penis.
8. Withdraw before the erection is completely gone and remove the condom carefully, tying it off so that the fluid does not spill.

**RUMPS**

**Materials and Supplies**
All the materials used in the RUMPS program are inexpensive, locally found materials. If materials are bought at the market or are second hand, it is important to stress the need to thoroughly wash these items before using them. When bought in bulk, an average RUMPS kit of two pads and three liners cost about 1,400 UGX.

For the outer part of the menstrual pad the best materials are made of cotton, which is absorbent, easily washable and unlikely to cause irritation. For our program, we have used school uniform fabric since it is so widely available. However, you can use cotton t-shirts, baby blankets, the material for baby nappies (reusable diapers), pillow cases, etc. A girl can also visit a tailor for scrap materials, which is usually sold at a very low price.
For the liners, we used bathing towels made of 100% cotton. When choosing a material make sure it is very absorbent since this part of the pad is meant to soak up the blood. Other possible materials are fleece, sock material, second hand towels, etc.

Thread, buttons, needles and ribbon can be found locally at reasonable prices at shops or the market. Another alternative is barrowing needles from family and friends and reusing buttons from other clothing items.

**Cutting and Sewing Instructions**

**Step 1: Make a template**
You should use cardboard or some other type of thick, sturdy paper for the template so you can reuse it many times. The basic outline is included in the appendix of this manual but the measurements do not need to be exact and they can vary depending on the size of the person using the reusable menstrual pad. Once you have drawn the template on your cardboard, cut it out.

**Step 2: Trace the template onto your fabric**
Take two pieces of your fabric and place one on top of the other. Then use chalk to trace the template onto your fabric. Cut the traced template out of your fabric. One piece is used for each side of the pad. Depending on the flow of your period, you may want to add a few more layers. You should make at least two pads.

**Step 3: Cut the ribbon**
Cut the ribbon into 9 cm long pieces. You will need two pieces of ribbon per pad.

**Step 4: Sew the pad together**
Put two strips of ribbon between the two pieces of fabric as shown on the diagram. Start sewing the two pieces of fabric together at the location shown by the arrow on the diagram. Loop the thread around the material for the most durable stitch. Be sure to sew through the ribbon 10 times each to make sure that it is secure. When you have finished sewing through the last ribbon, turn the pad inside out and complete the sewing from the outside.

**Step 5: Sew on your button**
Make one buttonhole with a scissors or a razor blade by folding one wing and cutting it. Make sure the buttonhole is somehow near the edge of the wing, so it does not cause bunching. Secure it by reinforcing the hole with simple sewing along its edge. Sew one button onto the other wing in the same place.

**Step 6: Make the liner**
Using the same material for the template, draw the template for the liner in a rectangle, about 22 cm by 13 cm. Then cut the template. Trace the template with chalk and cut the liner from
the material. You should make at least three to four liners. Also if the material you are using is thin you should add layers.

**Step 7: Sew the liner**
Sew along the edges of the liner because the edges will fray with time.

**Instructions for Use**
**Step 1:** Place the pad in the panties, just as you would with a disposable pad.
**Step 2:** Take the wings, wrap them around the knickers and button them under the knickers to secure it in place.
**Step 3:** After 4 to 6 hours, depending on menstrual flow, unbutton the pad, remove it and replace it with another.
**Step 4:** Wash the soiled pad immediately.

**Changing, Washing and Drying Suggestions**
When you have your period you will have a day pad and a night pad. You need at least three liners and two outer pads because while you are wearing one pad, the other will have been washed and drying. This means that every time you change the pad you will be washing the soiled one. Many people do not want to touch blood even if it is their own. As a result, women are hesitant to properly wash their RUMPS pads. An easy way to overcome this challenge is to soak the pad for thirty minutes in soapy water. This soak works surprisingly well to remove most of the blood. After that time, the pad can be washed in new soapy water. (Despite best washing practices, the pads can stain over time.)

The RUMPS pads can be dried in the same place that women dry their knickers; however sunlight is a natural sterilizer and it would be best to dry the pads outdoors. The easiest way to do this would be to place the pad inside another piece of clothing. That way the pad is hidden from obvious view as it dries properly with the clothing.

**Common Questions and Myths**

**Questions**

1. **What is menstruation?** The monthly bleeding from the uterus of a non-pregnant female.

2. **Why do I bleed very much and my friend doesn’t bleed so much? Why is my period 7 days long but someone else’s is only 3?** A lot of differences in menstruation experiences due to hormones. Every woman produces different amounts of four key hormones. The amounts of these hormones affect length of the period, blood flow, pain and other menstruation symptoms. Many things can affect hormone balance such as nutrition, stress and exercise.

3. **Why do I have stomach, back and breast pain during menstruation?** The uterus is a muscle that is contracting to push out the blood. This muscle gets tired,
therefore causing pains.

4. What can I do for these pains? You can take Panadol. You can also take a washcloth soaked in hot water and place it on your body where you feel pains. You should also avoid foods like chocolate, sweets, coffee and tea. It is also good if you drink lots of water.

5. Why do I have my period then skip 3 months and then have it again? This can be due to hormone imbalance, diet, exercise and stress. As long as you are not having sex, you do not need to worry. This is very common for young girls because their bodies are not used to the menstruations yet. It takes time to be regular.

6. Why haven’t I gotten my period yet? All girls are different. Some get their period very early like P3 and some don’t get it until they are 20 years. It is okay if you have not gotten it yet. However if you have pains but aren’t bleeding you should see a doctor.

7. What is this white mucus that comes from my vagina? This mucus is vaginal fluid. It is a good thing; it means your vagina is healthy. If it changes colour to yellow or green or starts to smell like rotten fish, you should see a doctor because you could have an infection.

8. Why do some girls pull on their labia? This is a cultural practice. The aunties teach the girls at ages 9 or 10 to do this because it is thought to be sexually stimulating and help in childbirth. It doesn’t help in childbirth in any way- it is only for beauty and personal preferences.

9. When are safe days? There are no safe days. You have a chance of getting pregnant every day. Some days your chances are small and some days they are big. You can even get pregnant when you are bleeding because sperm can live in the body for seven days. If the egg is in the uterus and the sperm is there you can get pregnant. You cannot tell when the egg comes into the uterus or when it leaves your body, so be safe and use a condom.

10. If I jump up and down after sex can I get pregnant? Yes.

11. If I wash with soda, Nomi soap or Omo soap right after sex, can I get pregnant? Yes. Soda and soap do not protect you from pregnancy.

12. If I have sex standing up or in water can I get pregnant? Yes.

13. If I am a virgin and have sex can I get pregnant? Yes.

14. If I let the boy touch my breast will it help them grow? The only things that cause
breasts to grow are hormones, which are in your body. This is just a way for a boy to try to touch your breasts.

15. If I wait too long to have sex will my vagina close up? No.

16. Why do some girls bleed when they have sex? Every vagina and penis is different. If the penis is bigger than the vagina then tearing of the vaginal wall can occur and some blood will come out.

17. What is Candida? This is a yeast infection, which results in an itchy and burning feeling of your vulva. These are very common in Uganda because of the heat and humidity, although it can be caused by not cleaning yourself well, changing your knickers and can be passed through sex. Even though it can be passed through sex, medical professionals do not assume that this is what happened. It is important to get treatment for these infections from the pharmacy.

18. Why do I sometimes smell in my private areas? That smell is pretty common. The best thing to do is keep yourself and your knickers clean.

19. Does the Pill Plan (birth control pill) or injection cause you not to become pregnant after you stop taking it? No it does not. It may take a few months after stopping the pill for your body to get back to regular but it does not cause infertility.

20. Why do some women keep getting their period when they are pregnant? This can happen and it is called spotting. However, it should not be a regular period, it should be very light. If this happens the woman should see a doctor just to make sure everything with the baby is okay.

21. Why can’t some women get pregnant? It is important to stress that it is not always the woman’s fault. The man’s sperm may not be good. Female infertility can occur if the fallopian tubes are not letting the egg pass down, damage from STDs can be the cause, failure to ovulate (no egg released), follicle problems (no egg produced) or the uterine lining is not a good place for the fertilized egg to implant.

22. Why do some women produce babies with disabilities? This can occur if the woman smoked or drank any kind of alcohol even local brew when she was pregnant. It can also happen naturally when a baby is growing inside the mother. There is no 100% way to stop this from happening.

Sexual Health Myths
- After having sex if you wash your vagina with soda, you'll turn back into a virgin.
- When a woman rides a bicycle she loses her virginity and her vagina becomes very large so a man will not enjoy her.
- If you delay to have children your uterus will shrink.
• If you abstain for too long your vagina is close and develop a bone.
• If you have sex with your slip/knickers hanging on the outside roof your house you will not get pregnant.
• If you have big breasts it means that you started sex when you were young.

References


Peace Corps, *Peace Corps/Uganda Health Handbook*


*Photos were collected from the following websites:*
  - www.nursingcrib.com (7 April 2012)
  - www.goeshealth.com (7 April 2012)

About this Manual

This RUMPS Manual was created by the Peace Corps Volunteers, Audrey Denton, Bethany Miota and Chelsea Roberts, working at Coordinating Centres. The manual was compiled for the Training of Trainers Workshop for Head Teachers and Senior Woman Teachers. The adaption of the RUMPS Program intended to teach P5-P7 girls about reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and RUMPS, with the assistance of Senior Woman Teachers. The project was funded by Peace Corps through a VAST grant, with additional support and contributions from the community.