



# The Alternatives

So which alternatives to tampons should you use? Well, it's of course completely up to you and what you're comfortable with, but below are the alternatives Tampaction completely endorses. All of the other alternatives to conventional tampons pose health and environmental risks that we feel are not worth taking. Visit our website at [www.tampaction.org](http://www.tampaction.org) for more info about these and other menstrual products.

## Organic Cotton, Non-chlorine Bleached Tampons

### What they are

They're tampons. You can buy them with or without applicators just like the conventional tampons.

### What they're made of

100% organic cotton, and that's all. It is not bleached with any form of chlorine, so the bleaching process cannot add any toxins to the tampon. It has no rayon in it. The cotton it was made from was grown without pesticides or herbicides.

### Who's making money off them

Terra Femme was founded by Willi Nolan, a fabulous womyn who has done some really important tampactivist work. The staff of Organic Essentials is almost entirely women, mostly white Christian Texans and led by farmers. Check them out yourself at: <http://www.organicessentials.com/employees.htm>.

### Good Aspects

- Not laden with pesticides
- No chlorine bleaching
- No rayon
- You cut them to the size that is right for you
- Easy to use
- Extremely comfortable

### Bad Aspects

- There is a chance of TSS
- Disposable and wasteful
- Two to three times more expensive than mainstream tampons
- Absorbs vaginal mucus, altering your twat's pH balance. This can lead to yeast infections.
- Clogs up septic systems.
- You can't use your menstrual blood for art and plant fertilizer
- Not sterile

### Where to get them:

At natural food stores or online at:

**Terra Femme:** [www.web.net/terrafemme/](http://www.web.net/terrafemme/)

**Organic Essentials:** [www.organicessentials.com/](http://www.organicessentials.com/)

**Natracare:** [www.natracare.com/](http://www.natracare.com/)

## The Keeper

### What it is

It is a cup worn internally, holding (instead of absorbing) monthly menstrual flow. It can be worn up to 12 hours, and even overnight. Lasts for at least 10 years.

### What it's made of

The Keeper is made of natural gum rubber, tapped from trees without killing them.

### Who's making money off it

*"Made and distributed by women, for women."*

### Cost:

\$20-\$36 (or \$0.17-\$0.29/month)

If you spend \$35 on the Keeper, and you usually spend \$4/month on other products, in ten years you save \$445.00

### Good Aspects

- Collects blood.
- Does not absorb blood
- Environmentally friendly
- You can use your menstrual blood for plant fertilizer and art
- No chlorine bleaching
- Lasts for 10 years
- Affordable
- Reusable, hence better for the environment
- 3 month money back guarantee
- Extremely comfortable, you can't really feel it
- when you're wearing it, much like a tampon
- Great for travelling (nothing to carry around)
- Fun to empty in public restrooms

### Bad Aspects

- There is a *slight* chance of TSS, although no cases have been linked to the Keeper
- If you have tendencies towards dehydration or urinary tract infections the Keeper may aggravate the infections
- Some menstruators find that the Keeper increases risks of yeast infections, although most menstruators do not encounter this problem
- It can be messy to change
- The suction effect is initially disconcerting
- Only comes in 2 sizes, so it might not fit you perfectly
- Takes a few tries to learn how to insert it and remove it properly
- If you have a full bladder, it can knock it out of place and make it leak
- If you're allergic to latex you should not use the Keeper ("latex" is another name for "rubber" which the Keeper is made out of)

### Where to get it:

**SEAC:** [www.tampaction.org](http://www.tampaction.org)

**The Keeper:** [thekeeper.com](http://thekeeper.com)

## Nothing

### What it is

It's nothing. It means you don't use any product to deal with your blood: you just menstruate, and whatever happens, happens. Whatever gets stained, gets stained. The trick to it is a few things. For starters, if you currently use internal menstrual products that are absorbent [tampons, sponges, cloth tampons], you probably will have a slightly lighter and shorter flow if you stop. So you won't necessarily be gushing menses all over your underwear [if you wear underwear]. The next trick is layering. Marlee wears underwear, tight jeans and a dark-colored skirt. Shira wears underwear and jeans, and has never bled all the way through her pants.

### What it's made of

A whole bunch of nothing.

### Who's making money off it

Nobody. Maybe you are, because a penny saved is a penny earned and you're sure saving a lot by not buying products – disposable or otherwise.

### Other pros and cons

This is messy and takes some practice, but it doesn't disturb the pH balance of your twat. It doesn't cost money [except the cost of clothes you might ruin, but if you don't care about that sort of thing then go wild]. This method does not involve supporting any nasty misogynist polluting industry, nor does it involve chemicals – or the possibility of chemicals – of any variety.

### Website:

We wish there were a website. Someday there will be. For now you can try Shira's [[www.deadletters.biz/belowthebelt/](http://www.deadletters.biz/belowthebelt/)], because soon there will be stories about all kinds of menstrual products and what folks think of them. Testimonials, sort of. Want to be pseudo-famous? Testify! Send Shira your stories. [shib51@yahoo.com](mailto:shib51@yahoo.com)

## Reusable Cloth Pads

### What it is

A cloth, reusable menstrual pad. This includes any rag-like cloth you stick in your underwear to soak up your flow. It can include carefully-sewn pads made from a pattern that took years to perfect, or it can be ripped-up old pajamas.

### What it's made of

Cotton. Soft comfy flannel, deep luxurious terry cloth, made lovingly in factories, in bedrooms and at Stitch 'n' Bitches – by hand, on industrial sewing machines or on Shira's [or your] grandmother's 1971 ElnaSuper. Of course, it varies depending on whether you make them yourself or buy them, and then it depends who you buy them from.

### Who's making money off it

Me, or maybe you. Shira [Below the Belt] makes cloth pads and sell them: so do Many Moons, GladRags, Urban Armor, Menarchy, LunaPads, Pandora Pads: Shira's friends Kristin, Sharon, and Erin: Shira's friend's girlfriend Annie: and lots of other folks.

### Good Aspects:

- They let your blood flow naturally, as it was meant to
- You can be very close to free and it means that you're making something for yourself that you can be proud of and get excited about every single month (or however often you menstruate)
- You can use your menstrual blood for plant fertilizer and art
- You can make them yourself out of old clothes and towels, using the patterns in the back of this packet. The creative and nostalgic possibilities are endless!
- Affordable
- Soft and comfy (not like disposable pads)
- Reusable, hence better for the environment
- No risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome
- No chlorine bleaching

### Bad Aspects:

- You have to be willing to wash them
- Not so convenient if you're out for long periods of time. You may have to carry the bags home in a plastic bag
- Depending on pad, can be bulky
- If you just wash them by hand, they get pretty hard and crunchy, so a washing machine is needed

### Where to get them:

Go to [www.seac.org/tampaction/reusablepads.shtml](http://www.seac.org/tampaction/reusablepads.shtml) to find patterns to make your own and info on all the other places to order pads!

# Take Action!

*Pressure your school or community convenience or book store to provide sustainable, alternative menstrual products to bleached tampons and disposable pads. In the process, educate your community about the destructive feminine hygiene industry and the sustainable alternatives to conventional pads and tampons that exist.*

With pressure from youth activists like ourselves, our communities will be at the forefront of decreasing the demand for harmful menstrual products by introducing, supporting, and using sustainable alternatives. During this process we will transform our culture's attitudes towards bleeding by bringing this issue out into the open in our communities, and we will build our power base as community members by successfully holding our institutions accountable to our and the earth's wellbeing.

## How to Run the Tampaction Campaign:

### 1. Contact the campaign coordinators

Let us know you want to work on the campaign so we can make sure you have access to all the resources you need. See contact info on the back of this brochure.

### 2. Sign onto the listserve for updates

Sign up for our update listserve at [www.tampaction.org](http://www.tampaction.org) to stay up to date on campaign progress and new resources.

### 3. Read through the Tampaction Action Packet

Download the Action Packet from our website for step by step instructions and tips on how to run the campaign.

### 3. Explore the campaign website: [www.tampaction.org](http://www.tampaction.org)

Our website provides organizing materials, networking forums, more detailed info on alternatives, background info on the feminine hygiene industry and its destructive practices, and many other resources. Make sure to check back regularly for new and updated info.

# Tampaction Resources

### 1. Call us and ask for advice!

The campaign coordinators are always available and excited to help you out with your campaign. Give us a call any time day or night with any questions, comments, or ideas. See contact info on the back of this brochure.

### 2. Explore the campaign website: [www.tampaction.org](http://www.tampaction.org)

Our website provides organizing materials, networking forums, more detailed info on alternatives, background info on the feminine hygiene industry and its destructive practices, and many other resources. Make sure to check back regularly for new and updated info.

### 3. Join our listserve and mailing list.

Join our listserve and mailing list for updates on the campaign and any new resources or developments.

### 4. Join in on our monthly national organizing conference call.

Tampaction organizes a conference call every month to give activists working on the campaign across the country an opportunity to share their local work, coordinate actions, and develop strategies to make the campaign a success. Check back on our website or call the coordinators to find out when the next conference call is.

### 5. Order our campaign goodies.

We're constantly adding to our Tampaction clearinghouse which contains a medley of pro-menstrual pins, stickers, books, t-shirts, menstrual products, and more. Check on our website for in detail goody and ordering info.

### 6. Bring a Tampaction speaker to your school or community.

Throughout the year we're available to come to your community or school to give Tampaction workshops and organizing trainings. Check out the website for available workshop presenters and a schedule of current events and speaking tours.