



EW, THAT'S GROSS!

MYTHS, STIGMAS, TABOOS AND WHY WOMEN'S HEALTH CONVERSATIONS ARE SO MESSY



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ABOUT THIS SESSION:

WELCOME TO THE TEACH-IN ABOUT THE PRESENTERS



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- Not all women have periods.
- Not all individuals who have periods are women.
- On any given day, 800 million individuals around the world are menstruating.
- Anyone can participate in a discussion regarding menstruation!



EUPHEMISMS

What have you heard?

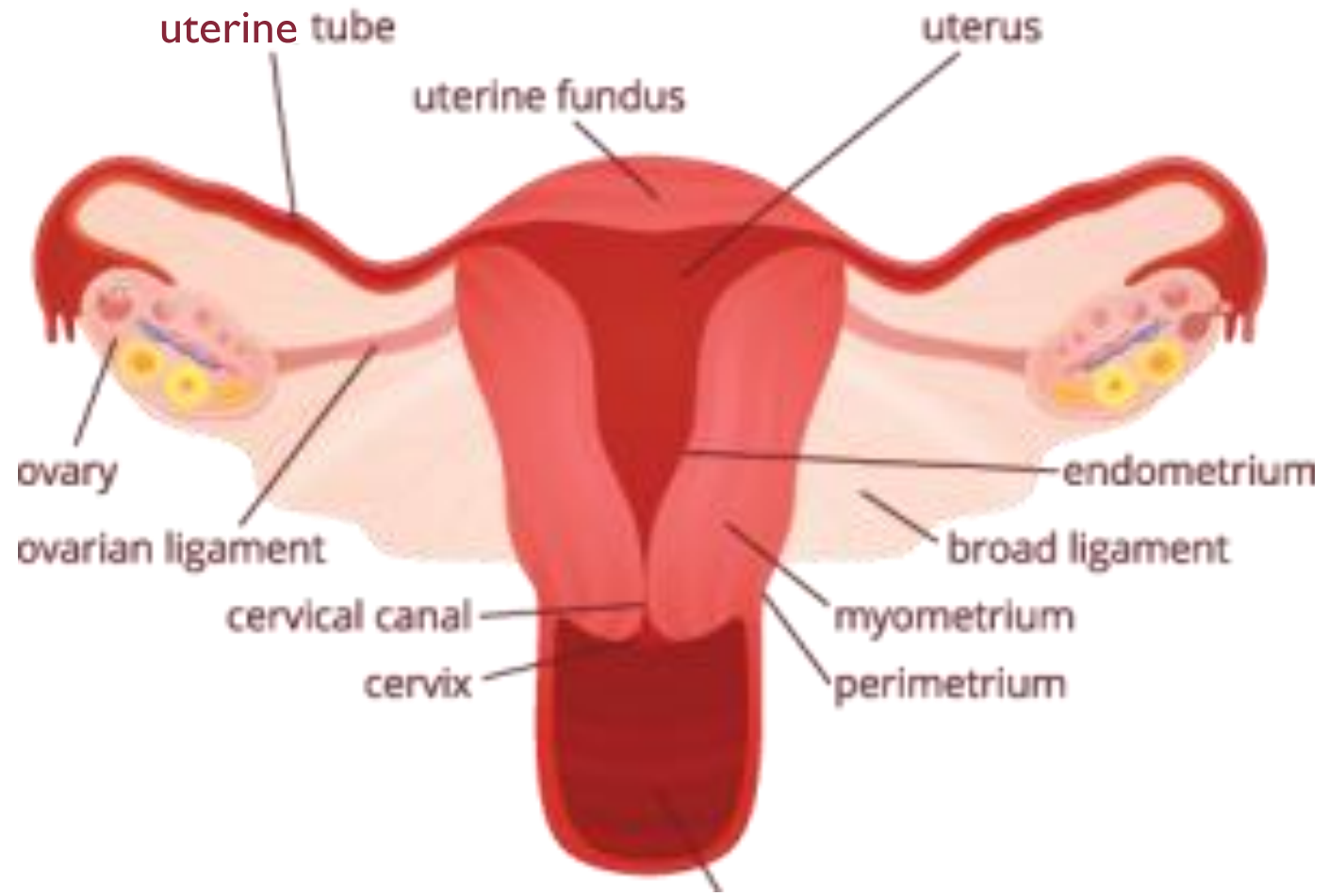
EUPHEMISMS:

- Aunt Flo
- My friend
- On my cycle
- That time of the month
- Shark Week
- The curse
- “You know”



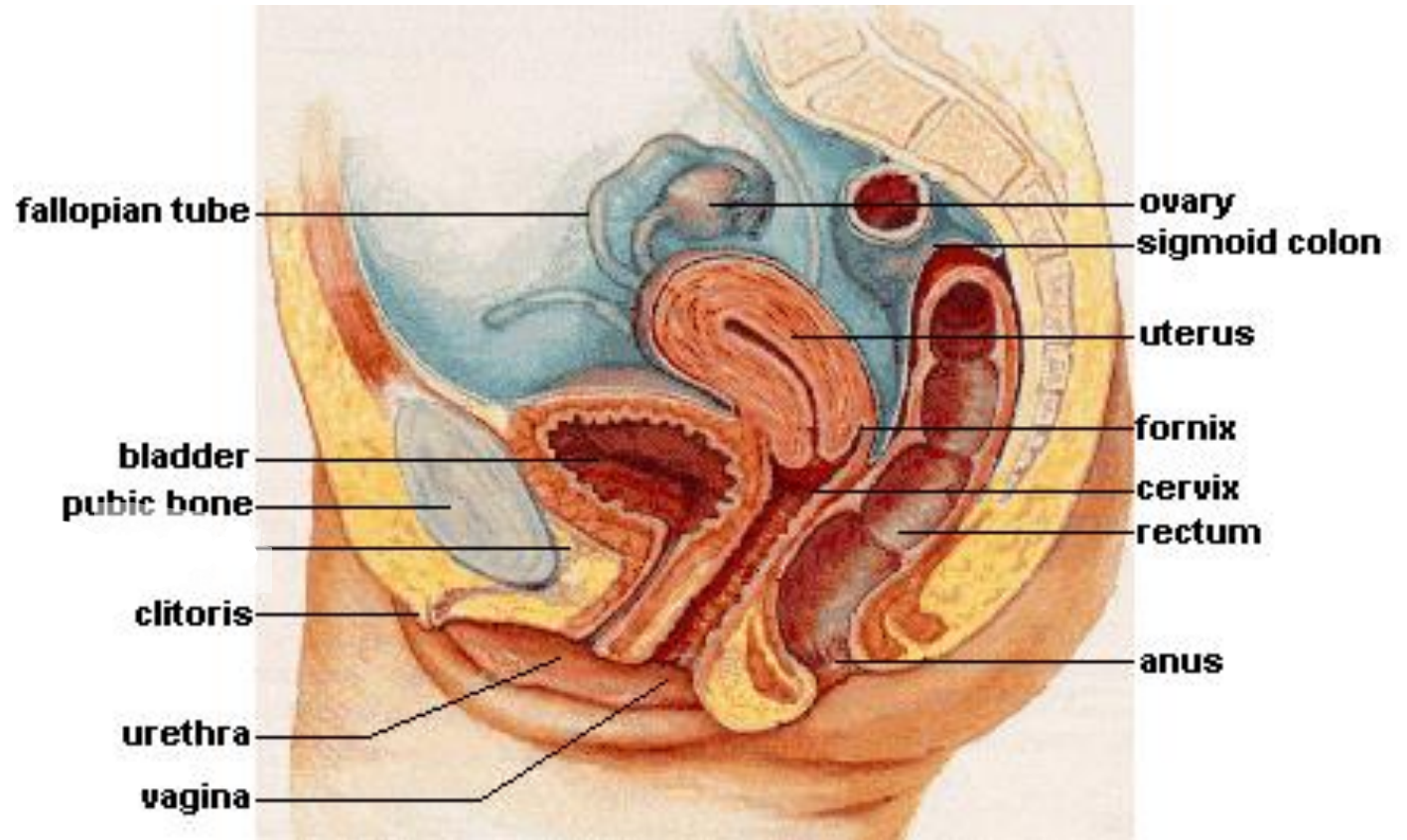
ANATOMY

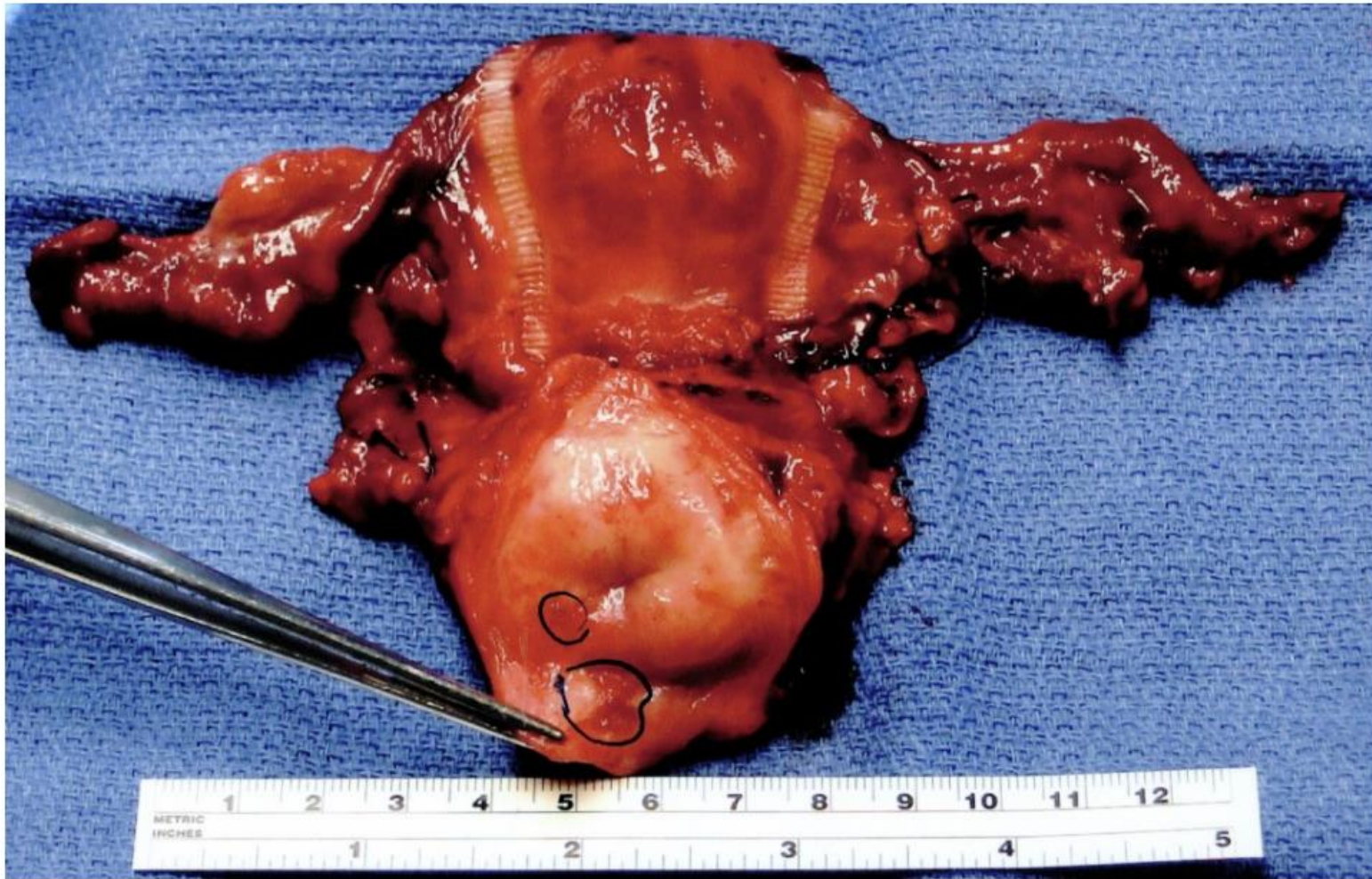




INTERNAL ANATOMY

- Vagina – tube-shaped organ, approximately 3-4 inches long when unaroused.
- In resting state, vaginal walls touch. When aroused, they balloon out to allow penetration.

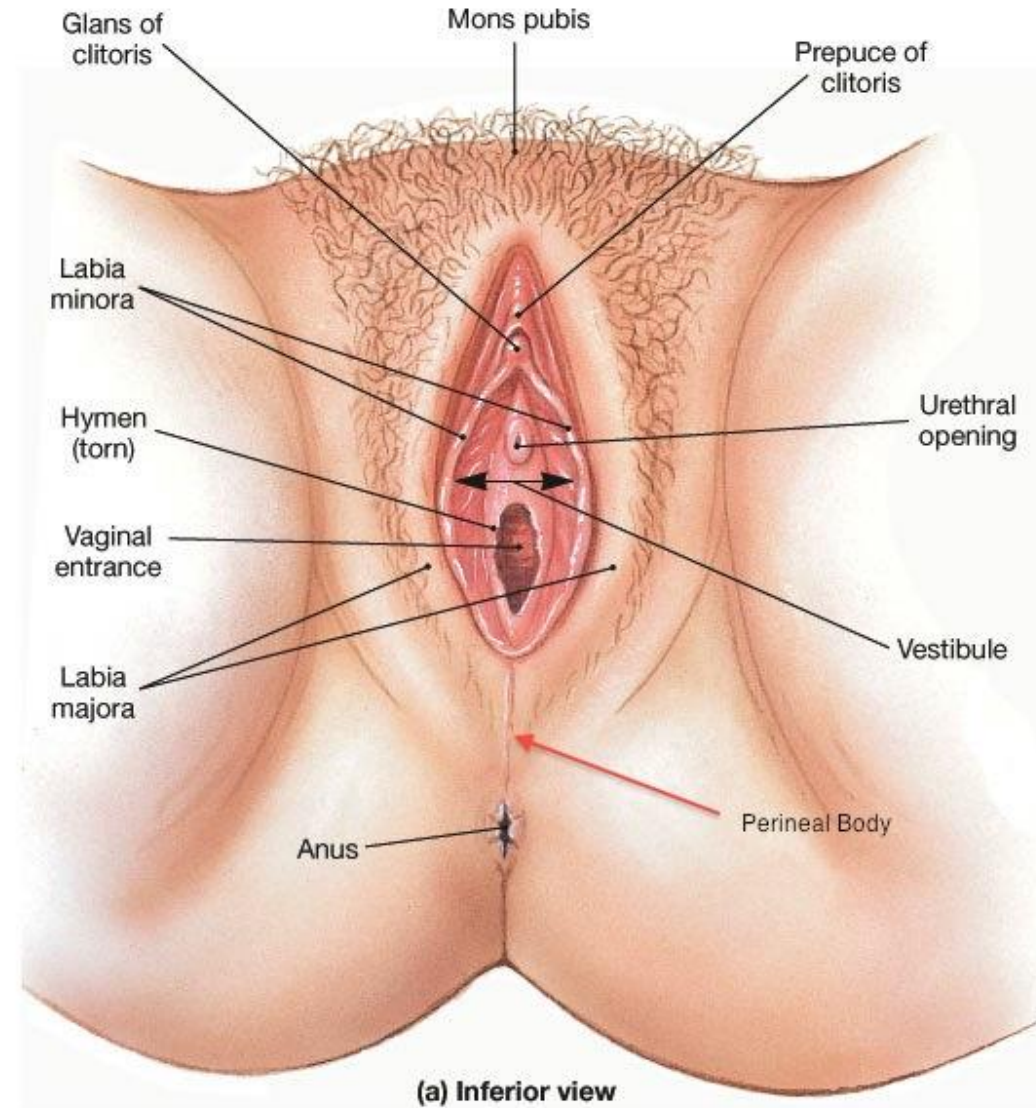




Uterus after hysterectomy

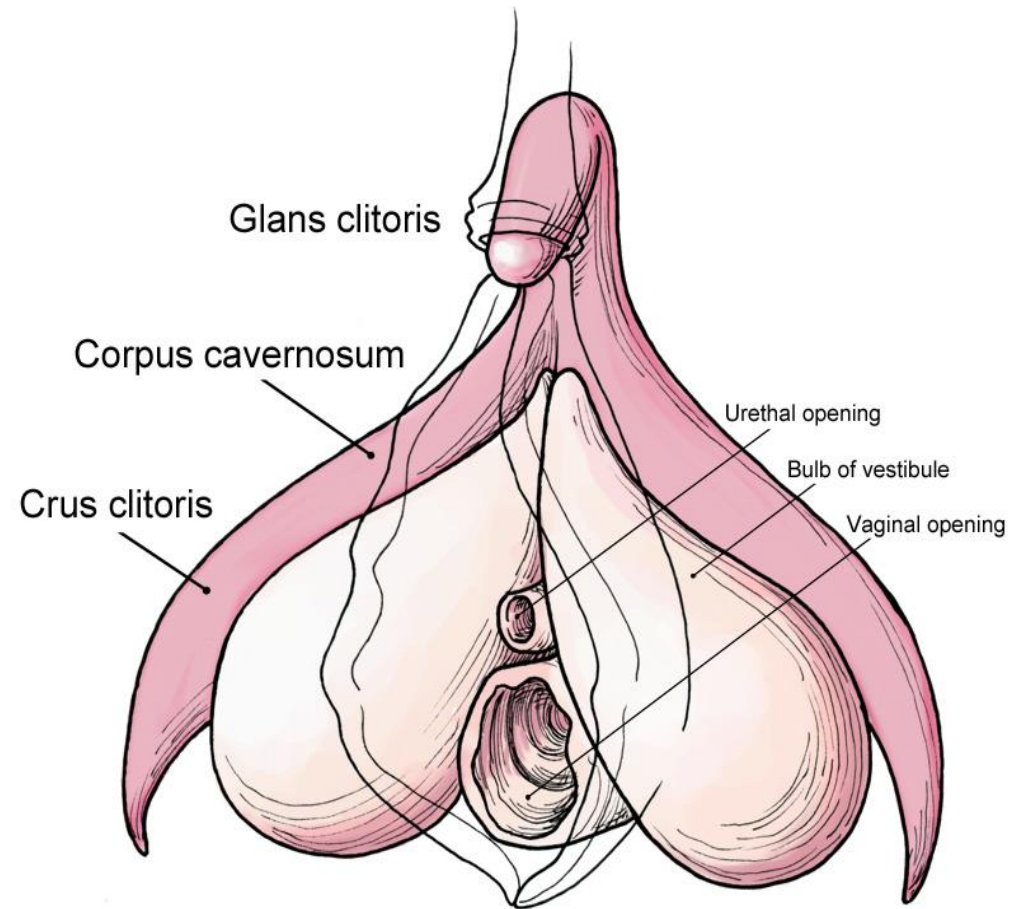
EXTERNAL ANATOMY

- External genitals – sometimes referred to as the vulva.
 - Clitoris
 - Glans, bulb, & crus
 - Prepuce
 - Mons pubis
 - Labia minora – Inner labia (lips)
 - Labia majora – Outer labia (lips)
 - Vaginal entrance
 - Urethral opening



INTERNAL CLITORIS

- Discovered in 1998?





HISTORICAL CONTEXT



BEFORE THERE WERE TAMPONS...

- Hawaiian and South Asian cultures: moss, ferns, and grasses.
- Ancient Egypt: papyrus tampons.
- Roman Era: wool tampons.
- Victorian Era: free bleeding.
- Strips of cloth, rags, and other fabrics.
- Sea sponges.
- Menstruation huts.
- Wood pulp pads.
- Garter belts.

THE HISTORY OF HYSTERIA

Pre-1900s

- Periods and women as unsanitary, unhealthy, and unstable.
- Greek “restless uterus” and the “Female Nature.”
- 1831: Menstruation is detoxification for women.
- “Every woman carries with her the seeds of hysteria.”

1900-2000s

- Invention of the vibrator and psychological analysis.
- The Rest Cure.
- Stereotypes regarding pre-menstrual syndrome and hormonal “rages.”
- 1970s: embracing menstruation is the first step to feminism.
- Social media activism.

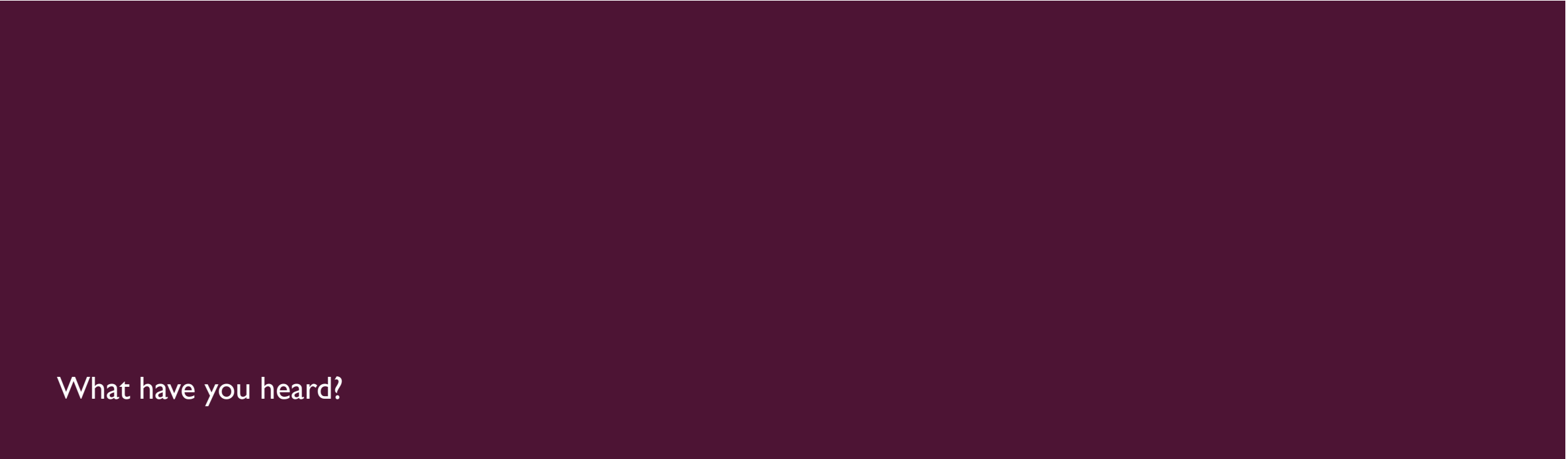
PADS VS TAMPONS

- Early pad and tampon ads were very similar to each other.
- Around the 1980s, there was panic about Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) and more pads were sold than tampons.
- Tampon advertising then becomes focused on activity (athletes, business women running to catch a subway, exercising) to imply that pads hold individuals back while tampons allow “more mobility, both physically and career-wise.”





MYTH VS FACT



What have you heard?

MYTH VERSUS FACT

You shouldn't use a tampon in the first year of your period.



Fact: If you're old enough to have your period, you're old enough to use a tampon.

MYTH VERSUS FACT

Your cycle must be 28 days.



Fact: Every body is different.

MYTH VERSUS FACT

Really bad period-related pain is normal.

Fact: If it keeps you from living your day-to-day life touch base with your doctor.

MYTH VERSUS FACT

Having your period on a camping trip is going to attract bears.

Fact: Menstrual “odors” do not attract bears.

MYTH VERSUS FACT

Menstrual blood is different from regular blood.



Fact: Menstrual blood IS regular blood.

MYTH VERSUS FACT

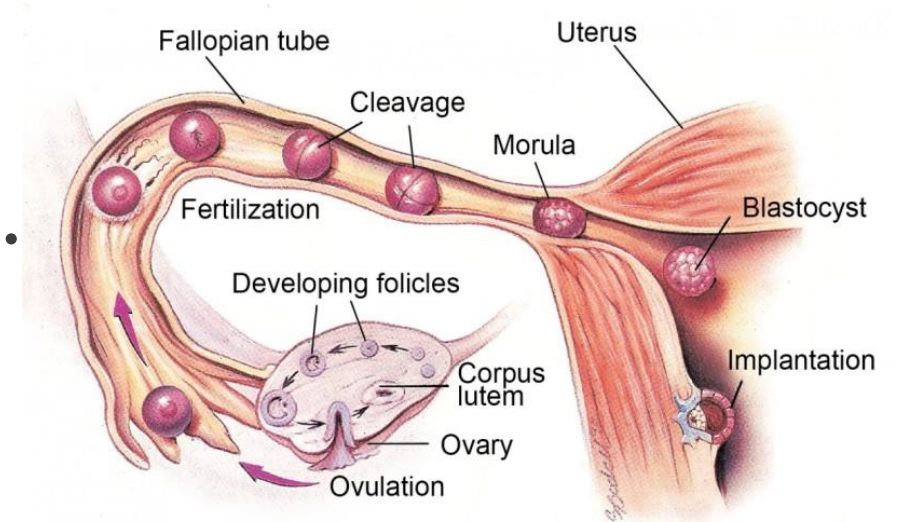
You shouldn't have sex on your period.



Fact: Sex is A-okay!

MYTH VERSUS FACT

You cannot get pregnant during your period.



Fact: Sperm survives and ovulation still happens!

MYTH VERSUS FACT

Exercising during your period is bad for you.

Fact: Exercise is actually one of the best ways to ease menstrual cramps.

MYTH VERSUS FACT

There is one best way to deal with period blood.

Fact: There are lots of methods to soak up menstrual blood.



NOTICE:
DESPITE THIS PHOTOGRAPHIC
EVIDENCE, YOUR PERIOD IS
NOT A FATAL DISEASE THAT
CAUSES YOUR FACE TO LOOK
PERMANENTLY BUMMED OUT.
YOU CAN RISE FROM A
SEATED POSITION WHILE
MENSTRUATING.



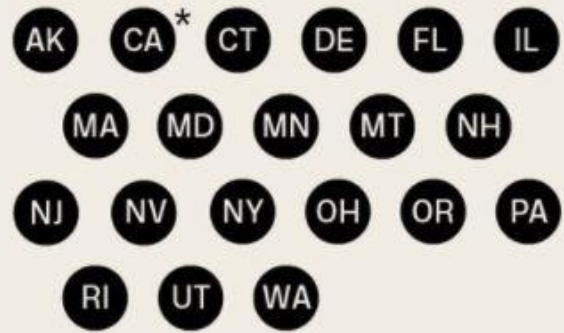
GOSH MY PERIOD IS EXPENSIVE...

- The Tampon Tax, the Pink Tax, the Period Tax
 - What is it?
- Tax Free. Period.
 - <https://www.taxfreeperiod.com/>

Tax Free. Period.
State Scoreboard

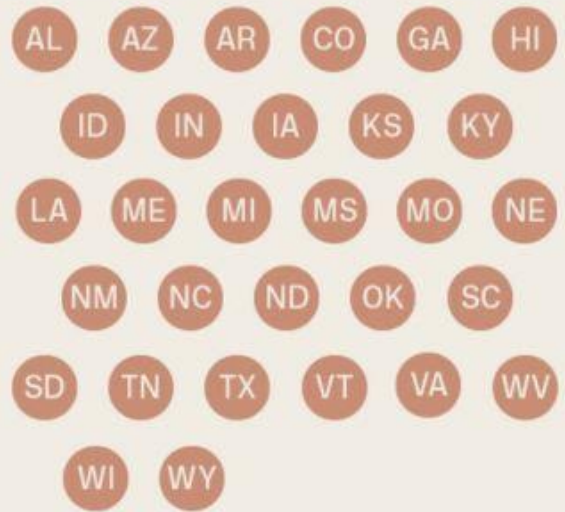
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Tax Free.



30

Still Not Tax Free.



* CA is tax-free only until July 2023

REPLENISH: A RESOURCE FOR STUDENTS

- Allendale
 - Located in Kirkhof Center 0074
- Health Campus
 - Located in CHS 353
- Come with your student ID



ALTERNATIVES

WHAT MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS DO YOU USE?

Reusable Products





THINX

BETTER
↓
UNDERWEAR

FOR
OR ANY
MENSTRUATING
HUMAN
↓

WOMEN

SHEDDING
OF
THE UTERINE
LINING
↓

WITH

PERIODS

—

hellothinx.com



ACTIVISM

LEVERAGING YOUR PRIVILEGE



FREE THE TAMPONS



“Who decided toilet paper was free, but tampons aren’t?”

“LUXURY” TAXES – THE FACTS. PERIOD.

**Stop taxing
our periods!
Period.**

Period Equity

“Families who qualify for federal assistance programs like SNAP or WIC can't use those benefits to purchase [menstrual] hygiene products; the programs forbid using an EBT card to purchase pads or tampons alongside **"luxury items"** like alcohol and cigarettes.”

WHAT IS MENSTRUAL EQUITY?

In order to have a fully equitable society, we must have laws and policies that take into account the reality that half the population menstruates. Menstrual products should be tax-exempt. They should be affordable and available for all, safe for our bodies and the planet. Periods should not hold anyone back, period.

~ Jennifer Weiss-Wolf

Periods Gone Public: Taking a Stand for Menstrual Equity

WHAT DOES MENSTRUAL EQUITY LOOK LIKE?

- Comprehensive education and information on periods and period products.
- Removing sales taxes on menstrual products.
- Oversight from the Food and Drug Administration on what is used to make menstrual products.
- Access to menstrual products. Nearly 1 in 5 girls in the US have missed school due to lack of period protection.
- Available period products for vulnerable populations, such as homeless, incarcerated and trans individuals.
- Appropriate medical and personal leave for individuals suffering from period symptoms.

WHAT KIND OF ACTIVISM HAS BEEN HAPPENING ON CAMPUS?

- During Winter 2020, Student Senate worked on providing free menstrual hygiene products on campus using 5 key locations in Allendale.
- In Winter 2020, Student Senate passed W-20-04: Call for Grand Valley State University to Create a Task Force Charged with the Research of the Impact of Menstrual Hygiene Product Accessibility on Students No Later Than Fall 2020, to Report to the Division of Student Affairs No Later Than the End of Fall 2020.
- This led to the creation of a Menstrual Health Taskforce, who will report to the Dean of Students Office on Dec. 15th, 2020.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER AT GVSU?

- A study conducted during the Summer of 2020 found that...
 - Only one male or gender inclusive restrooms had any menstrual hygiene products on campus.
 - 48.5% students who menstruate state that their education is affected by menstrual hygiene product accessibility.
 - Over 75% of students who menstruate believe it is “very important” or “important” for GVSU to provide free menstrual hygiene products.
 - Only 24.7% of students had ever used an on-campus dispenser.
 - It would only cost \$56 per semester per female student (according to the Fall 2019 semester) to provide free menstrual hygiene products. This is .8% of one students tuition.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? GET INVOLVED!

- Contact your elected officials regarding the “tampon tax.”
- Normalize periods in conversation.
- Advocate for products that are safe for your body and the planet.
- Donate menstrual products to those in need.
- Support organizations that are dedicated to fighting for menstrual equity:
 - Aunt Flow (goauntflow.com)
 - Girls Helping Girls Period (girlshelpinggirlsperiod.org)
 - Period Equity (periodequity.org)



WHAT CAN INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN SITUATIONS WITH
PRIVILEGE AND POWER DO TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE?



REFERENCES

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