

Mooncup Memoirs

Contributed by Nettie

(or how to save a good few quid and the planet at the same time)

Several months ago, having read the book "Cleaning Yourself to Death" by Pat Thomas, I decided to make a radical change to my lifestyle by eliminating nearly all chemicals from my house. I had already gone down the road of buying, and then growing, organic food, so making the switch to total detox seemed to be a logical step. In less than a week, I had banished all lotions, potions and detergents from my home, and my kitchen was plastered from top to bottom with experiments with bicarbonate of soda, beeswax, soap flakes and vinegar (although not at the same time you understand.)

By the end of this manic week, I felt the familiar monthly twinges start, and I headed towards the bathroom cabinet to grab a sanitary towel. This made me stop in my tracks.

A few months previously I had decided to almost stop using tampons, as the idea of sticking a bit of chemically treated cotton you-know-where didn't really sit at all comfortably with me. I still had a few on standby for big nights out in tight trousers, but most of the time I relied on those bleached paper boats that you sometimes see sailing down the Thames estuary. Except those things now, of course, just like disposable nappies, have evolved to contain chemicals to "deodorise" and "lock the wetness in". So was I any better off? No. And due to my decision the environment was far worse off than I was.

My mind went back to a conversation I'd recently had with a friend who had, as part of her research for a college course, looked into alternatives to conventional sanitary protection. I remembered her telling me about something called a "Mooncup", which she had tried with a fair bit of success, so I decided to do some research of my own.

The Mooncup is a bell-shaped menstrual cup, with a scary-looking stem on the base (that can be trimmed to fit), and made of soft medical-grade silicone rubber. It is re-usable, and available in two sizes: one for women who have given birth, and one for those who haven't. It costs £17.99 and is available on a 3 month trial, with a full refund if you are not completely satisfied (goodness knows what they do with their returns!) If it is looked after properly it can apparently last up to 10 years.

Based on the obvious benefits (no chemicals, no more paying for towels and tampons, and more environmentally friendly), I decided to place an order and try it for myself. Having used a diaphragm for contraceptive protection, I had no qualms about wearing it, and my only concerns would be if it leaked, or was uncomfortable.

Upon its arrival, I dutifully trimmed the stem to about 1" and popped it in. At first, I could feel it, it leaked, and I had a bummer of a job to remove it. However, I decided to throw caution to the wind and chop the whole stem off - and there were no more problems. I found it easy to insert and remove; I couldn't feel it at all and there was only a tiny bit of leakage on the first two days of my period, but nothing that a small panty liner couldn't handle. So I still have to use panty liners for a couple of days but it's a vast improvement on the waste I was creating before. Towards the end of my period the Mooncup can be left in safely all day without any need to empty it until evening. It is incredibly comfortable and I often forget I am wearing it. It is fine to use during the night, and it easily withstands the rigours of regular horse-riding.

Cleaning the Mooncup is easy too; you just run it under a tap or give it a wipe with some toilet paper. Initially this requires some planning in advance; you either need to find a cubicle with a basin, or have the toilet paper torn off and ready to go. In between periods you need to boil it for five minutes to sterilise it, so it is essential to have an old milk pan to hand especially for the purpose.

In the year I have had it, my Mooncup has paid for itself twice over. I never have the problem of accidentally trying to pay for my groceries with a sanitary towel, or pulling a tampon out of my bag instead of a pen, or cursing myself for going for a big night out without taking spares with me.

As you have probably guessed, I am a big fan. If you would like more information, or would like to place an order, then please go to <http://www.freedomfromtampons.co.uk/> and see for yourself

If you'd like to ask questions or make suggestions on this subject, visit the Downsizer Forums

A further alternative to conventional sanitary protection can be found in this article: [Make Your Own Menstrual Pads](#)