





# ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

Initiative in  
Manitoba Schools



A Resource Guide  
for Teachers



Access to menstrual products initiative in school : a resource guide for teachers

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This resource is available on the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning website at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/menstrual\\_products/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/menstrual_products/index.html).

*Disponible en français.*

Available in alternate formats upon request.

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# Access to Menstrual Products Initiative in Manitoba Schools

The Manitoba government is distributing free menstrual products to school divisions and funded independent schools, as well as agencies, domestic violence shelters, resource centres, and specialized programs identified by Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat. These products are being provided as part of a three-year partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart.

The following information is to support school divisions and schools in planning to receive and distribute the menstrual products to those that experience barriers to accessing the products. This document may be updated as new learning and experience inform this province-wide initiative.



# How Does Menstrual Health and Hygiene Connect to Healthy Schools?

Student health and education are interdependent. Healthy Schools Manitoba promotes the use of a comprehensive school health approach. A holistic school health environment is the best place to learn, work, and play. Improving menstrual health and hygiene outcomes for Manitoba students fits within a holistic, comprehensive health approach (see *What Is Comprehensive School Health?* by the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health at [www.jcsh-cces.ca/en/concepts/comprehensive-school-health/](http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/en/concepts/comprehensive-school-health/)).






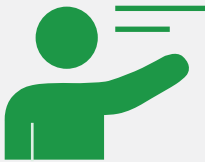
Source: Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health. *What Is Comprehensive School Health?* [www.jcsh-cces.ca/en/concepts/comprehensive-school-health/](http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/en/concepts/comprehensive-school-health/). Used with permission.

Schools play an important role in raising awareness about the need for adequate and sufficient menstrual health and hygiene management and breaking stigmas surrounding menstruation. Menstrual health and hygiene is connected to healthy schools through a number of school-based practices that can provide students with knowledge, access to menstrual and sanitary products, and adequate facilities. Comprehensive health education for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students should also include programming on menstrual health and hygiene and puberty education where appropriate in the Manitoba K to 12 physical education/health education (PE/HE) curriculum.

Students should be provided with relevant health information about products, services, and community partnerships and services. For example, Manitoba Teen Clinics offer free and confidential health/medical services for youth only. At a Teen Clinic, youth can speak to nurses, doctors, and sometimes counsellors. For more information about Manitoba Teen Clinics or to locate a clinic please refer to [www.teenclinic.ca/](http://www.teenclinic.ca/).

# Four Essential Elements of the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative\*

The following four elements guide and inform requirements and recommendations around this initiative for schools:

Privacy	Diversity	Accessibility	Education
			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ space autonomy</li><li>▪ personal safety</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ culturally responsive</li><li>▪ gender affirming</li><li>▪ person-centred approach</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ for all students with a demonstrated need</li><li>▪ barrier-free access</li><li>▪ diverse language and communication access</li><li>▪ options and choice</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ menstrual health and hygiene education and awareness</li><li>▪ knowledge of menstrual products use</li><li>▪ positive, not fear- or shame-based</li></ul>

\* The information in this section was adapted with permission from the Oregon Department of Education document *Menstrual Dignity for Students Toolkit*.



**Privacy** includes having safe, private spaces where students can access menstrual products, instructions on how to use them, and trash receptacles for private disposal. This means students self-determine when they need to access products, what products they choose, where they are safe to use them, and how to take care of their own bodily functions with dignity. Students who require adult support should be accorded as much independence as possible, ensuring an appropriate level of consent and respecting their dignity, as identified and documented within the student-specific planning process.



**Diversity** means including, affirming, and honouring differences in how communities learn about, access, and make decisions about health. School and school division staff should not make assumptions about which students may require menstrual products.



**Accessibility** means that products, education, and dispensers are equitably available and accessible for all students, including those with diverse needs and abilities (e.g., needs for additional languages or forms of communication, needs specific to gender). Equitable access allows all students to exercise their own choice on their own terms from a variety of products. Access should respect various protected characteristics of *The Human Rights Code* of Manitoba (see <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/h175e.php>).

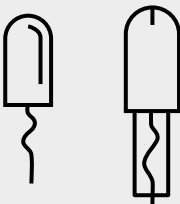
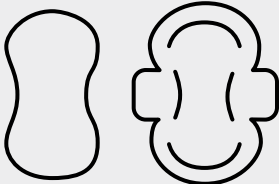
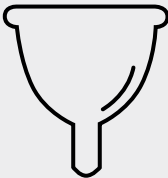
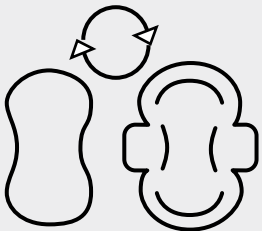
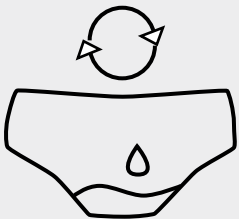
In its preamble, *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act* (available online at <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/2013/c04013e.php>) references the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *The Human Rights Code* of Manitoba, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In this act, there are five areas of standards. Each standard is enacted as a regulation and becomes law. For more information, see <https://accessibilitymb.ca/>.



**Education** includes acquiring knowledge and understanding of how bodies work, without shame or stigma. PE/HE classes should provide effective puberty education for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students that clarifies changes and growth, and they should provide a safe space for students to learn how the human body works. For more information about providing a safe space, see page 23.

# What Are Menstrual Products?

A wide variety of menstrual products are available, as shown in the table below.

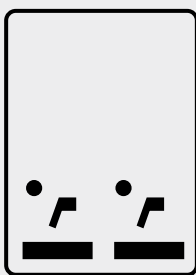
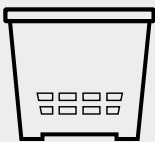
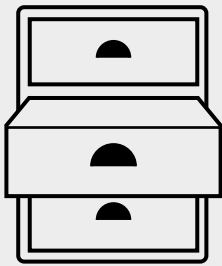
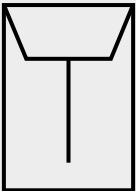
Product Name	Definition	Variety Examples
<b>Tampon</b> 	<p>A tampon is a disposable menstrual product designed to absorb menstrual fluids. It is inserted into the vagina during menstruation.</p>	<p>Varieties of absorbencies include light, regular, super, super plus, and ultra.</p> <p>Tampons can be designed with plastic or cardboard applicators, or without applicators.</p>
<b>Pad</b> 	<p>A menstrual pad, or just pad, is a disposable menstrual product designed to absorb menstrual fluids. It is affixed to underwear during menstruation.</p>	<p>Absorbency and size options include the following: panty liner, light, regular, heavy, overnight, long.</p>
<b>Menstrual cup</b> 	<p>A menstrual cup is a bell shaped cup designed to collect menstrual fluids. It is inserted into the vagina during menstruation.</p>	<p>Menstrual cups come in different shapes and sizes, and are made of different materials.</p>
<b>Cloth pad</b> 	<p>A cloth pad is a washable menstrual product designed to absorb menstrual fluid. It is affixed to underwear during menstruation.</p>	<p>Cloth pads also come in different shapes, sizes, and absorbency levels, and are made of different materials.</p>
<b>Period underwear</b> 	<p>Period underwear are washable menstrual products designed to collect menstrual fluids during menstruation.</p>	<p>Period underwear comes in different absorbency levels, sizes, and styles.</p>

Source: Oregon Department of Education. *Menstrual Dignity for Students Toolkit*. Nov. 2022. Adapted with permission.



# Information about Dispensers and Disposal Units

A **dispenser** refers to a container sufficient to hold menstrual products for distribution and can include something installed on a wall or placed on a shelf. A **disposal unit** is designed to ensure all those who menstruate can safely and hygienically dispose of waste. These can include both trash receptacles and liners and/or disposal bags.

Types of dispensers	Pros	Cons
<b>Mechanical wall units</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can use existing dispensers</li> <li>affixed to wall to prevent tampering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>product-dependent and may not allow for required product variety</li> <li>more expensive installation and space considerations</li> <li>harder for students to take more than one at a time, when needed</li> <li>may have coin operation and look like the products cost money (when they are required to be free)</li> </ul>
<b>Countertop baskets</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lower cost</li> <li>takes up less space</li> <li>easier for students to take what they need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>easier to remove or tamper with</li> </ul>
<b>Freestanding storage drawers</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>readily available and lower cost than mechanical wall unit options</li> <li>could stock a large number of products (less re-stocking)</li> <li>easier for students to take what they need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>easier to remove or tamper with</li> </ul>
<b>Envelope or file affixed to wall</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may be better for schools with smaller menstruating populations (e.g., elementary school)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>would be harder to stock variety of products for larger populations</li> </ul>

Source: Oregon Department of Education. *Menstrual Dignity for Students Toolkit*. Nov. 2022. Adapted with permission.

# Menstrual Health and Hygiene and the Physical Education/Health Education (PE/HE) Curriculum

Menstrual health and hygiene are key learning areas in the PE/HE curriculum. Specific learning outcomes (SLOs) related to menstruation and menstrual health are found throughout the Kindergarten to Grade 12 physical education/health education curriculum.

Two strands of the physical education/health education curriculum, *Substance Use and Abuse Prevention* and *Human Sexuality* (in GLO 5: Healthy Lifestyle Practices, as well as in the personal safety [prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse] sub-strand of GLO 3: Safety), may be potentially sensitive to some students and their parents/families and/or communities. This sensitivity may be based on family, religious, and/or cultural values. Learning outcomes focusing on menstruation and puberty are found within the Human Sexuality strand. Potentially sensitive content must be treated in ways that are appropriate for the local school and community context. For further information about the treatment of sensitive content, please refer to the Curriculum Overview page of the *Physical Education/Health Education* website at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/c\\_overview.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/c_overview.html).

Under GLO 5: Healthy Lifestyle Practices (see [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/framework/healthy.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/framework/healthy.pdf)), the Human Sexuality strand includes SLOs in Kindergarten through Grade 12 that cover biological growth and development (i.e., puberty), as well as psychological and sociological factors associated with sexuality and puberty. The Personal Health Practices strand also includes SLOs associated with personal hygiene practices from Kindergarten through to Grade 10.

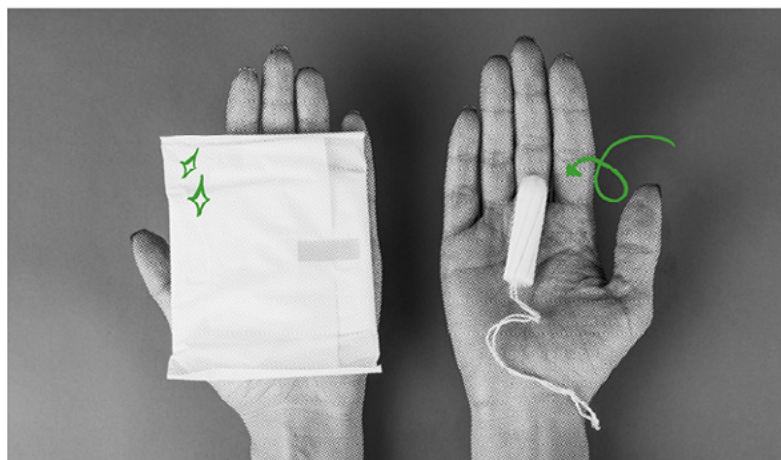
Discussions about menstrual health and hygiene would also be associated with SLOs found within GLO 4: Personal and Social Management (see [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/framework/personal.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/framework/personal.pdf)) under the *Personal Development*, *Social Development*, and *Mental-Emotional Development* strands.

PE/HE teachers could also include learning experiences in physical education around how menstruation and menstrual health influence participation in movement experiences, physical activity, personal exercise, and so on. A significant amount of research in this area is available for physical education teachers and would be beneficial for their professional learning about how to enhance inclusion in their classes. For some information about how menstruation may effect sport participation, refer to *Menstrual Period: Relative Energy Deficiency in Sports* by the Center for Young Women's Health at <https://youngwomenshealth.org/guides/female-athlete-triad/>.

# What do Manitoba teachers need to consider when teaching about menstruation during PE/HE?

Considerations for teachers when teaching menstrual health and hygiene or puberty education outcomes in the PE/HE curriculum include the following:

- ✓ Teach menstruation and puberty as a normal, positive part of human development.
- ✓ Address myths, taboos, and stigma around menstrual health, and connect to accurate health information.
- ✓ Connect language (including slang) with accurate health terminology in order to ensure understanding and cultural responsiveness.
- ✓ Create spaces for anonymous questions, and provide answers.
- ✓ Include classroom lessons and activities for all genders of students, in order to reduce shame, stigma, and gender-based bullying or harassment.
- ✓ Include—in posters, instructions, and classroom education—school-specific contact people and local community resources for questions and disclosures.
- ✓ Connect students to medical services and health information.
- ✓ Integrate 2SLGBTQIA+-specific information in instruction, including intersex information in puberty lessons.



# Ideas for Using Gender-Affirming Language while Teaching Menstrual Health and Hygiene–Related Outcomes

- ✓ Refer to menstruation **without using gender** in order to be gender affirming for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, educators, and staff. Emphasize physiology during puberty education more broadly.
- ✓ Use “menstruating students” or “people who menstruate” instead of “girls.”
- ✓ Use “menstrual products” or “period products” instead of “feminine hygiene products.”
- ✓ Explain “someone with a uterus and ovaries may begin to menstruate” instead of “girls may begin to menstruate” during puberty education classes.
- ✓ Use **open words** like “most” or “typical” or “another” instead of binary “opposite” or “normal” or “other.”



# Resources

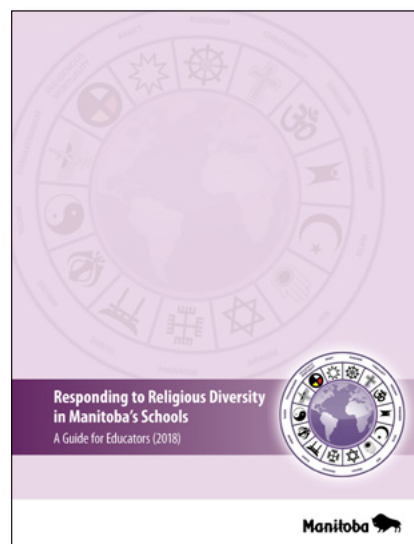
## Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Sexuality Education Support Documents

The following two sexuality education support documents are helpful for Manitoba educators when planning lessons on puberty education or menstrual health and hygiene:

***Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students in Manitoba Schools*** (available online at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/transgender/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/transgender/index.html)) provides guidelines for ensuring that schools are safe, respectful, and equitable places for transgender and gender diverse students. There is also a Q & A available at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/transgender/q\\_and\\_a.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/transgender/q_and_a.pdf) that helps school divisions and schools develop their own policies, protocols, and/or guidelines related to supporting transgender and gender diverse students.



***Responding to Religious Diversity in Manitoba Schools: A Guide for Educators*** (available online at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/religious\\_diversity/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/religious_diversity/index.html)) is a resource for educators and schools seeking to respond to the needs of religiously diverse students and communities.



# Resources to Support Menstrual Health and Hygiene Education and Awareness in Manitoba Schools

## AboutKidsHealth

AboutKidsHealth.ca ([www.aboutkidshealth.ca/](http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/)) is a Canadian website (all content is approved by health care providers at the Hospital for Sick Children) that provides information that uses gender-affirming language and is available in French and English. Some resources may not be available in both languages. The website also has a variety of learning hubs, including a teen learning hub (at [www.aboutkidshealth.ca/yourteen](http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/yourteen)) and a mental health learning hub (at [www.aboutkidshealth.ca/mentalhealth](http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/mentalhealth)), with multimedia resources.

## Amaze

Amaze (at <https://amaze.org/>) provides age-appropriate sexual health education resources for young people, educators, parents, and caregivers. Amaze aims to help adults communicate effectively and honestly about sexual health education with children and adolescents. Amaze's educator page provides classroom resources, tool kits, and lesson plans. There are a number of videos and lesson planning resources focusing on menstrual health and hygiene:

- All about Getting Your Period (<https://amaze.org/video/all-about-getting-your-period/>)

- Menstruation Sensation: All About Your Period (<https://amaze.org/video/puberty-menstruation-sensation/>)
- Menstruation Stigma (<https://amaze.org/video/menstruation-stigma/>)
- Menstruation: What to Expect (<https://amaze.org/video/puberty-menstruation-what-to-expect/>)
- Period Hygiene: Tampons, Pads, and Menstrual Cups (<https://amaze.org/video/period-hygiene-tampons-pads-menstrualcups/>)
- Period in Third Period (<https://amaze.org/video/period-in-third-period/>)
- Period Symptoms and Self Care (<https://amaze.org/video/period-symptoms-and-self-care/>)
- Puberty Toolkit (<https://amaze.org/educators/toolkits/puberty/>)

## Center for Young Women’s Health

The Center for Young Women’s Health (at <https://youngwomenshealth.org/>) is a partnership between the Division of Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine and the Division of Gynecology at Boston Children’s Hospital. It provides adolescents and young people with research-based health information. Their website aims to help all girls, young women, and transgender and non-binary young people improve their understanding of health and development.

The Center has a general information page on menstruation found at <https://youngwomenshealth.org/menstrual-period-all-guides/>. The website also contains detailed information about period products (at <https://youngwomenshealth.org/guides/period-products/>), including information on using tampons (<https://youngwomenshealth.org/guides/tampons/>) and eco-friendly products (at <https://youngwomenshealth.org/eco-friendly-period-products-all-guides/>) such as menstrual cups and period underwear.

## Centre for Sexuality

The Centre for Sexuality (at [www.centreforsexuality.ca/](http://www.centreforsexuality.ca/)) is a Calgary, Alberta-based organization that provides comprehensive sexual health information in schools. Their learning centre ([www.centreforsexuality.ca/learning-centre/](http://www.centreforsexuality.ca/learning-centre/)) has a section on puberty education (at <https://www.centreforsexuality.ca/learning-centre-category/your-body/>) and other topics that educators may find useful.

## Gender Spectrum

Gender Spectrum (at <https://genderspectrum.org/>) is a national organization committed to the health and well-being of gender diverse people. The organization provides resources and supports to schools and educators that assist in creating gender-sensitive and inclusive environments for all children and teens.

### *Growing Up OK!*

*Growing Up OK!* (available online at [www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/mcad/growingupok.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/mcad/growingupok.pdf)) is a booklet about puberty developed for children ages 9 to 12 (in Grades 4 to 7). *Helping Your Children to Grow Up OK!* (available online at [www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/mcad/helpgrowingupok.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/mcad/helpgrowingupok.pdf)) is a resource for parents/caregivers to help children through the physical and emotional changes of puberty.

## Rainbow Resource Centre

Rainbow Resource Centre (<https://rainbowresourcecentre.org/>) offers support to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community through education and programming for children, youth, and adults. Rainbow Resource Centre also provides supports for families, friends, and employers of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. In addition, Rainbow Resource Centre offers workshops for educators and youth that can be booked through their website.

## Sex & U, The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada has a sexual and reproductive health education resource called Sex & U (at [www.sexandu.ca/](http://www.sexandu.ca/)). There is a section called "Your Body" that provides resources on menstruation and puberty.

## Sexual Education Resource Centre (SERC)

The Sexual Education Resource Centre (SERC) (at <https://serc.mb.ca/>) offers a number of resources, including the Teen Talk program. Teen Talk offers workshops and peer education training for youth and service programs. The Teen Talk website (<https://teentalk.ca/>) offers resources for teachers on puberty and menstruation, and youth workshops can be booked through SERC.

## Teaching Sexual Health

Teaching Sexual Health (at <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/>) is a website developed by Alberta educators and health professionals offering strategies for teachers teaching the human sexuality components of the curriculum. There are a number of lessons available for teachers focusing on puberty that can be accessed through the site's Lesson Plan and Resource Finder at <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/teachers/lesson-plans-resources/resource-finder/>. There is a menstruation lesson available at <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/teachers/resource/puberty-my-period-all-about-menstruation-lesson-5/>.

## Tell It Like It Is

Tell It Like It Is (at <https://nevertmi.ca/>) is a Saskatchewan resource comprising nine modules that cover a range of topics and concepts in sexuality education. The aim of the resource is to provide accurate sexuality education to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities and diverse learning abilities. Modules can be found at <https://nevertmi.ca/resources/>.

## The Trevor Project

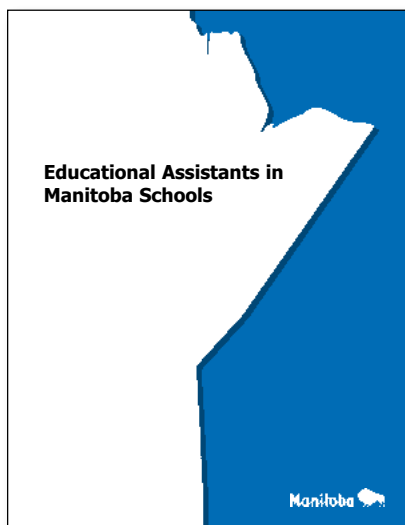
The Trevor Project (at [www.thetrevorproject.org/](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/)) provides introductory educational resources that cover topics and best practices for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Its main purpose is to support youth with suicide prevention and mental health supports.



# Other Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Resources

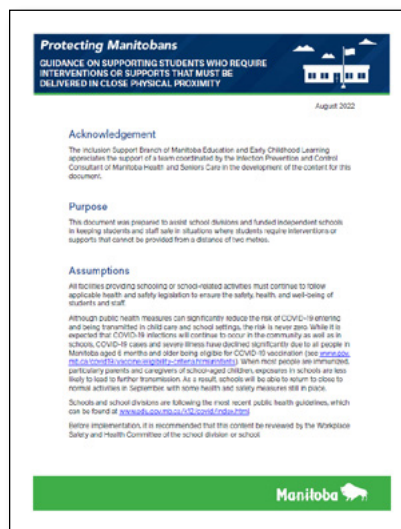
**Educational Assistants in Manitoba Schools** (available online at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/ed\\_assistants/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/ed_assistants/index.html))

Educational assistants work within school and school division policies and practices. Their roles are determined by the needs of the school division. Their day-to-day activities are directed by the principal, teacher, or other professionals under whose supervision they work, and can be as varied as the teachers and students they support. Appendix B: Student-Specific Competencies outlines suggestions for educational assistant training.



**Guidance on Supporting Students Who Require Interventions or Supports that Must Be Delivered in Close Physical Proximity** (available online at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/guidance\\_support\\_students.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/guidance_support_students.pdf))

This document was prepared to assist school divisions and funded independent schools in keeping students and staff safe in situations where students require interventions or supports that cannot be provided from a distance of two metres.

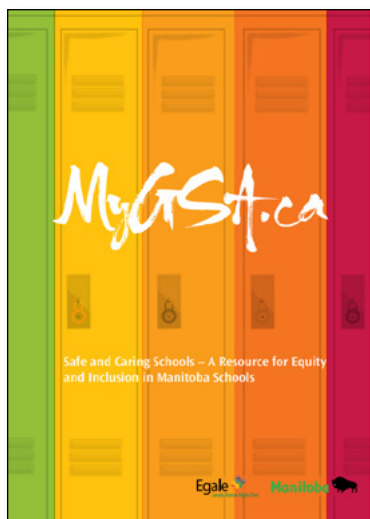


**Manitoba Safe and Caring Schools** ([www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe\\_schools/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/index.html))

The Manitoba Safe and Caring Schools website has a number of resources to support healthy school communities and to help ensure that schools are safe and caring places to learn.

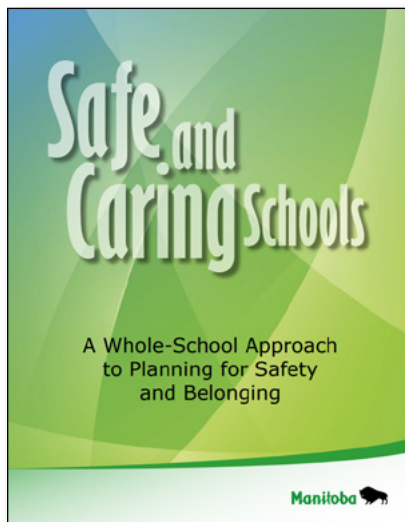
**Safe and Caring Schools: A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba Schools** (available online at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe\\_schools/mygsa/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/mygsa/index.html))

This resource helps Manitoba schools become safer, more equitable, and inclusive schools for all.



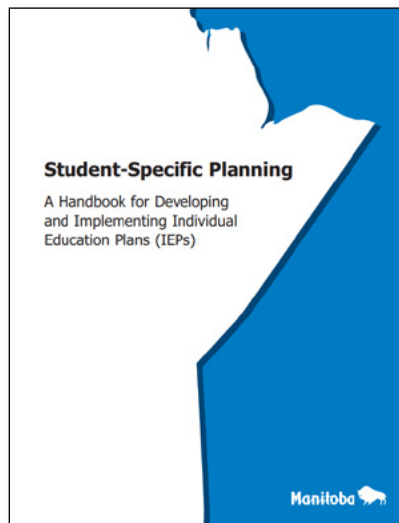
**Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging** (available online at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/whole\\_school/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/whole_school/index.html))

This document supports school and school division staff in planning for and sustaining positive, healthy, and safe schools.



**Student-Specific Planning: A Handbook for Developing and Implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs)** (available online at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/iep/pdf/planning/student\\_specific\\_planning.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/iep/pdf/planning/student_specific_planning.pdf))

*Student-Specific Planning: A Handbook for Developing and Implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs)* is a practical resource that provides student support teams with a foundational student-specific planning process to address the wide range of special learning needs of students.



# Responses to Frequently Asked Questions about the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative

## What is the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative?

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Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning has collaborated with the Department of Families to implement a whole-of-government initiative to increase access to menstrual products for youth and adults in greatest need.

## What is the identified need for barrier-free access to menstrual products?

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The relatively high cost of menstrual products impedes access for some youth and adults. While many schools and agencies in Manitoba provide menstrual products, access is often limited due to inconsistent funding sources or limited community donations.

## What company is the Manitoba government collaborating with for this initiative? How long will the arrangement be in effect?

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The Manitoba government has entered into a three-year agreement with Shoppers Drug Mart Inc. for a donated supply of menstrual products to distribute to the youth and adults in greatest need. Products will be available to order until June 2025.

## **Who will benefit from the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative?**

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The initiative specifically focuses on providing access to menstrual products to youth and adults in greatest need. The goal of the initiative is to support the well-being of these individuals by ensuring barrier-free access to products in schools and domestic violence sector agencies.

## **Who will receive the donated menstrual products? How often will the products be distributed?**

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The scope of this initiative includes all school divisions/districts and funded independent schools, as well as agencies, domestic violence shelters, resource centres, and specialized programs identified by the Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat. Shoppers Drug Mart Inc. will deliver the donated products twice a year (in September and January) to Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. The products will then be available for order on a monthly basis.

## **What is the estimated cost associated with this initiative?**

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Shoppers Drug Mart Inc. is providing a donation of 3,345,620 menstrual products per year for three years, with a value totalling approximately \$1.907 million or \$635.7 thousand in each of the three fiscal years. The Manitoba government will support the initiative by storing and then distributing the products directly to schools and agencies.

## **Why has the Manitoba government chosen to receive a donation from a company, rather than implementing an alternative funding approach?**

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Receiving the donation from Shoppers Drug Mart Inc. reflects responsive action to aid the identified need for barrier-free access to menstrual products in schools and agencies across Manitoba. Shoppers Drug Mart is a champion of social finance. It is a community-oriented leader and partner in helping to meet Manitobans' needs, which makes the Social Innovation Office (SIO) proud to collaborate with it for a second time on a major project. This integrated private-public effort joining Shoppers and the departments of Families and Education and Early Childhood Learning shows the commitment of all the sectors of Manitoba's society toward the betterment of our people who menstruate, especially those vulnerable and in need.

## How will the Manitoba government monitor the success of the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative?

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An evaluation of the initiative will be conducted to inform future funding decisions for menstrual products. The evaluation will be designed to determine who accesses the products and where, and then insights will be extrapolated from the data to address further barriers.

## Will the Province allocate funding to provide barrier-free access to menstrual products once the agreement expires?

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Yes. The Manitoba government is committed to improving access to menstrual products for youth and adults in greatest need. At the end of the agreement with Shoppers Drug Mart Inc., the government will assess whether to re-enter into a philanthropic contract or implement an alternative plan. An evaluation of the initiative will inform future funding decisions for the provision of menstrual products.

## What will school divisions and schools receive as part of the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative?

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Through this initiative, there are two varieties of tampons available for order:

- ✓ Tampax Pearl, regular absorbency, unscented
- ✓ Tampax Pearl, super absorbency, unscented

Please note that the difference between regular and super is absorbency. Regular absorbency tampons hold from 6 to 9 grams of menstrual blood. Super absorbency tampons hold from 9 to 12 grams of menstrual blood. They provide the extra absorption that some people need when their menstrual flow is heavy.

There are four varieties of menstrual pads available for order:

- ✓ Always Ultra Thin, size 1, regular flexi-wings
- ✓ Always Ultra Thin, size 2, long super, flexi-wings
- ✓ Always Ultra Thin, size 2, long super, flexi-wings, fresh scent
- ✓ Always Ultra Thin, size 2, long super, without flexi-wings

The variety of menstrual products (e.g., tampons/pads) available for order may be subject to change without notice.

Dispensers will be available for distribution in the coming months. Additional information and ordering instructions will follow shortly.

## **Can school divisions and schools with existing programs for accessing menstrual products participate in this initiative?**

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All school divisions and funded independent schools are able to order menstrual products through this initiative.

## **How can schools order menstrual product dispensers/disposal units?**

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Dispensers/disposal units will be available for distribution in the coming months. Additional information and ordering instructions will follow shortly. School divisions should start to do needs assessments to determine how many they require. Pre-existing dispensers located in schools that have not been provided through Shoppers Drug Mart Inc. may not be compatible with donated products.

## **How can schools order menstrual products?**

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Menstrual products will be available for order through the monthly process for ordering personal protective equipment (PPE) as established during the COVID-19 pandemic. The option to order menstrual products has been added to the order form.

Orders are subject to change without notice to accommodate equitable distribution of products. Orders cannot be adjusted or reshipped. If the menstrual products do not meet a school's needs for any reason, donations to another school or to a domestic violence shelter are encouraged.

## How should school divisions and schools distribute menstrual products to students?

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Through this initiative, school divisions will use their knowledge of local needs and their discretion to best identify priority schools to receive these products. Schools are encouraged to take student voices and perspectives into account when determining where and how menstrual products will be distributed.

School divisions and schools should ensure student privacy and access to menstrual products, recognizing the intent of this program is to target those most in need. Access should respect various protected characteristics of *The Human Rights Code* of Manitoba (see <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/h175e.php>).

## What accessibility considerations should schools make related to the distribution of menstrual products and placement of dispensers/disposal units?

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Schools should scan and carefully determine appropriate placement of dispensers and disposal units. Decisions should be person-centred and focus on privacy and accessibility for all students at all times.

Schools should create **safe spaces** for students in need. A safe space is a supportive, non-threatening environment where all can feel comfortable without fear of discrimination or reprisal. Creating a safe space is especially important when dealing with school health issues like menstruation, since it can involve deeply personal and/or traumatic experiences. Further information about a trauma-informed approach can be found in the Crisis Prevention Institute's *Resources Guide: Trauma-Informed Care* (available online at [www.crisisprevention.com/CPI/media/Media/download/PDF\\_TICRG.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*1jn6lfj\\*\\_gcl\\_aw\\*R0NMLjE2NjY3OTk0MjkuQ2owS0NRand0ZU9hQmhEdUFSSXNBREJxUmVneHhIZDdyYklwcE9NNkQwV3JuNXy2a21zc3h4d1hyUmN3eUxLUkfbEE4Y3FQVUlhdi14VWFbBHFfrUFMd193Y0I](http://www.crisisprevention.com/CPI/media/Media/download/PDF_TICRG.pdf?_gl=1*1jn6lfj*_gcl_aw*R0NMLjE2NjY3OTk0MjkuQ2owS0NRand0ZU9hQmhEdUFSSXNBREJxUmVneHhIZDdyYklwcE9NNkQwV3JuNXy2a21zc3h4d1hyUmN3eUxLUkfbEE4Y3FQVUlhdi14VWFbBHFfrUFMd193Y0I)) or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) document *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (available online at <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf>).

School divisions must “reasonably consider barrier-free access and universal design principles in planning for all new construction and significant renovation (MR 164/98)” (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, *Standards 9*). Schools should consider student confidentiality, privacy, and accessibility in the distribution of menstrual products. Some considerations include the following:

- ✓ Install dispensers at an accessible height within an appropriate-sized space.
- ✓ Offer products in varied locations. Some students may feel comfortable and safe only when products can be accessed in gender-neutral or universal washrooms. Others may prefer quick and open access through a **menstruation station** or **hygiene station** (see photo) where a student can get access to other hygiene products.
- ✓ Provide resources in languages and forms of communication representative of the students in the school.
- ✓ Ensure that menstrual products are available after school hours and during field trips when students are participating in school activities.
- ✓ Inform students which professional staff are most appropriate to speak to about health concerns and who can present students with relevant and accurate health information.
- ✓ Consider student voice in the distribution and advertisement of menstrual products.



Source: Oregon Department of Education. *Menstrual Dignity for Students Toolkit*. Nov. 2022. Reproduced with permission.



## How can schools incorporate student voice into decision making?

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Students can provide valuable insight into how schools implement this initiative. There are many ways that schools can engage with students. Here are some suggestions for school leaders:

- ✓ Create and conduct an anonymous survey.
- ✓ Host a student community panel or open forum with students and student leadership.
- ✓ Use anonymous question boxes in classrooms and/or universal washrooms, or virtually (e.g., Google Forms, Padlet, or Mentimeter).
- ✓ Connect with and support student groups (e.g., student councils, GSAs, special interest groups).
- ✓ Continuously monitor, evaluate, and adjust project implementation based on data, looking at student use, feedback, and even student attendance.

## How can elementary schools support their students through this initiative?

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Menarche, the onset of the first menstrual bleed, occurs at an average age of 12 years. However, the age of menarche often varies and is dependent on a number of factors. Puberty may occur in people who menstruate as early as ages 9 to 11 (i.e., Grades 4 to 6). This can be more difficult for a person when they and/or their peers do not have an understanding of what is going on with their bodies. Hormones may also make a person feel new sensations and emotions. Younger students may be reluctant to begin conversations with their parents and caregivers. This could cause added stress or stigma to a student, affecting their mental health and the student's hygiene practices and safety.

It is important that elementary schools plan to support students who menstruate in the elementary years. School divisions and schools should develop a clear procedure as to how a student may approach professional staff about personal health issues, determining who is the best staff member to respond to a student's health-related questions, and deciding how supplies will be made available to the student and how student privacy is maintained.

Appropriate lesson planning within physical education/health education classes can also help improve understanding and awareness about menstrual health and hygiene and reduce potential stigmas related to menstruation. Thoughtful and proactive communication with parents and caregivers addressing school health and health education issues such as menstrual health and hygiene is essential. Positive partnerships with parents and caregivers ensure the best outcomes for all students, not just those directly affected.

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