



Basic Training Manual for Menstrual Cup Trainings

Objective: To provide guidance and support to in-country menstrual cup trainers on basic women's health and anatomy to support the safety and accuracy in the education of menstrual cup usage.

This training manual is a baseline for Cova Project menstrual health trainers and should be adapted to the specific country context to which the information is being disseminated.

This manual is broken down into 4 sections:

Section 1: Create context for why we are all here today.

Section 2: Anatomy, puberty and menses

Section 3: Flowcup-How to use

Section 4: Question and Answer

Section 1:

- Create an environment where questions are asked and answered within the group of women.
- Introduce yourself and The Cova Project. The Cova Project is an Australian Charity that believes in access to safe sanitary solutions for all women.
- Know statistics of each country in terms of the percentage of women who don't have access to sanitary products and school days missed.
- Keep on topic with issues related to menses. Make it known there will be an opportunity for questions and answers at the end.
- Discuss bad blood versus good blood during menses, ensuring the discussion points lead to ensuring understanding this is a natural state for women's bodies. (We are combatting a stigma regarding menses being bad blood).

*The goal here is to open up the group to speaking and making it known that difficulties can be common.

(Allow 10 minutes) -*This is important to create a base for why we are here. We know the women know it is a problem but with the lack of talking about the issue, it might be nice to create a space and groundwork for options.*

Tip: Gathering women/girls in groups smaller than 25 allows for a more friendly training session. If possible, the trainer/Project Leader should be at eye level with the participants and be able to conduct a conversation more than a lecture. The ideal location for this discussion is somewhere neutral, where the participants feel safe.

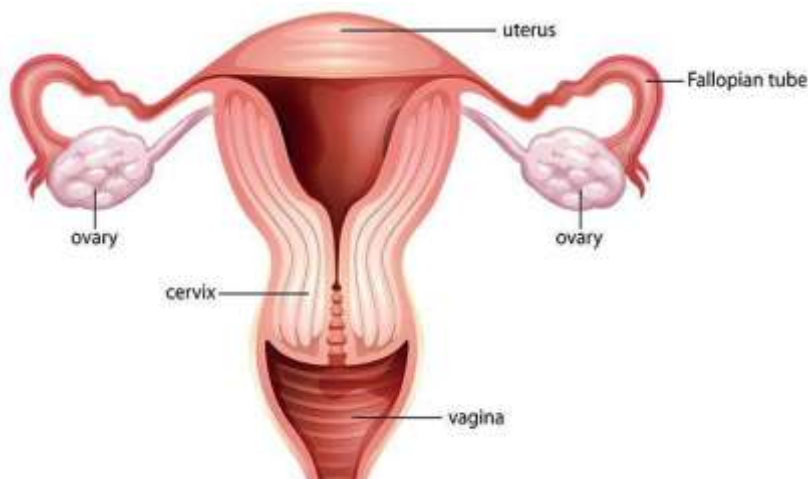
Section 2:

1. What is menstruation?

- Natural body function is essential for the reproductive health of women and girls.
- Lining (blood) from the uterus is shed through the vagina



- Happens monthly for 2 to 7 days with an average amount of blood loss of 30-40ml
 - Some experience lighter or heavier flows
2. What age does menstruation start and end?
- Start is typically during puberty which is around age 10 to 19
 - During puberty physical changes take place such as growing breasts, wider hips, and body hair with emotional changes due to a shift in natural hormones occurring in your body
 - Menstruation continues until menopause is reached around age 50, some sooner and some later
3. female reproductive system and menstrual cycle



source: <https://www.everydayhealth.com/sexual-health/female-reproductive-organs.aspx>

- The menstrual cycle occurs around 28 days but varies by person
- Tissue and bloodline the wall of the uterus to prepare the uterus for receiving a fertilized egg
- The egg isn't fertilized (by sperm from a man) and sheds along with the lining of the uterus

Section 3: Flow cup and how to use

- Firstly, what is a menstrual cup? (ask the question to the audience, has anyone ever heard of it? If not, ask if anyone is familiar with a tampon? Tampons are also inserted and if someone has used one before this often reassures the group about inserting sanitary products).
- Leaders can always make this personal if they use the cup, it can allow the group to ask more pointed questions and know that it is actually used by people in their community therefore shedding some stigma.

First some quick facts about the cup before teaching how to insert and remove it:

- The menstrual cup is a method used to manage menstruation
- It is inserted into the vagina to **collect blood**
- It was invented in the 1930s and is used by millions of women around the world



- It can be reused for **10 years**, so no need to buy new products making it very cost-effective!
- Made of **100% silicone**, a **medical grade and natural substance**
- They can be emptied **every 4- 12** hours depending on the flow
- Can hold **2 times** as much blood as a pad (cup= 30mls, pad= 10-15mls)
- Menstrual cups can be used without underwear
- They are **comfortable and easy to use**, after the initial period of getting used to inserting and removing
- **Less water** is needed to clean a menstrual cup than a reusable pad
- **Clean hands are important**
- Once you feel comfortable, when you use a menstrual cup you can play sports, ride a bike, run, jump, swim etc. **without leaking**
- It is **environmentally friendly**- silicone is a natural substance found from the earth. It does not clog latrines like disposable pads
- These cups are made in Sweden by Diana Lidforsen at Flowcup and have been used in Europe for many years...

Firstly: Sterilize.

At the beginning and end of your period you must sterilize your cup.

At the end of your period, it is necessary to sterilize your cup before storing it in its bag

To sterilize:

1. Insert your cup into a container (that won't melt) of boiling water, making sure the water covers the cup
2. Boil for **5 minutes**
3. OR You can use a **basin or container, fill with boiled water and soak the cup in for 5 minutes. (ensure it is submerged).**
4. After boiling it should be dried by the air
5. Keep it in a cotton bag for next time, and away from rats (hang it on a hook on the wall, or inside a plastic bottle cut in half)

Insertion

1. Start by going to a latrine, bathroom or a private place
2. Wash your hands with water and soap if you have it- (if no soap use friction by rubbing hands together hard) for 20 seconds. **WASHING HANDS IS VITAL.**
3. It is necessary to fold the cup before insertion to make it fit easily inside
- 2 folding techniques:
 - a. **'C shape'**: Press cup flat, then fold the cup in half.
 - b. **'Push down'**: Push down one side of the cup to fold into its base.



4. Squat down & gently push the folded menstrual cup into your vagina- be careful not to drop it.

-Once the cup is inside, release it so it pops open

-It will sit **below the cervix, inside the vaginal canal** and the vaginal walls will create a suction around it

- There is no way it can get lost inside your anatomy, because the **cervix is less than 1cm wide**, which is smaller than the width of the cup

TIP: If the cup hasn't popped open, **rotate gently** or move it around in a downward direction

TIP: You can also run your finger around the edge to feel it has popped open

*If any issues regarding the fit of a cup into a vagina, draw parallels with birthing a baby and the vagina stretches to fit what it needs, the vagina can adapt and will not/should not be painful to insert a cup.

- Once in place **it should feel comfortable**, and you may forget that it's there! For your first menstrual cup experience, you may want to remove the cup after a few hours to see how much blood it has collected. This will help you understand how often you need to remove it.

Removal

After **4-12 hours**, you will need to empty your cup

1. To remove, go to latrine or private place
2. Wash your hands with water and soap if you have it
3. Squat and insert your fingers gently to **feel for the base of the cup**, gently **pinch/squeeze the base of the cup** and slowly pull it down (show pushing cup in with one finger to ensure it doesn't spill)



TIP: Stop and get a better hold of it so when you pull it out, it does not spill
4. Empty the cup into the latrine or where appropriate

TIP: If you are having difficulty, you can use your pelvic muscles to “push” the cup further down, as if you are urinating. Or you can urinate before removing the cup.

Cleaning your cup

1. After removing it, and emptying the blood, you will need to rinse your cup before reinserting it
2. It can help if you carry a bottle of clean water or drinking water to rinse it while you are inside the latrine, or in the bathroom
3. **DO NOT USE SOAP OR BLEACH, NOTHING BUT CLEAN WATER TO CLEAN YOUR CUP**
4. If you have no water, you can wipe with toilet paper or tissue

Reinserting:

5. Make sure your **hands are clean** and reinsert as before

Remember

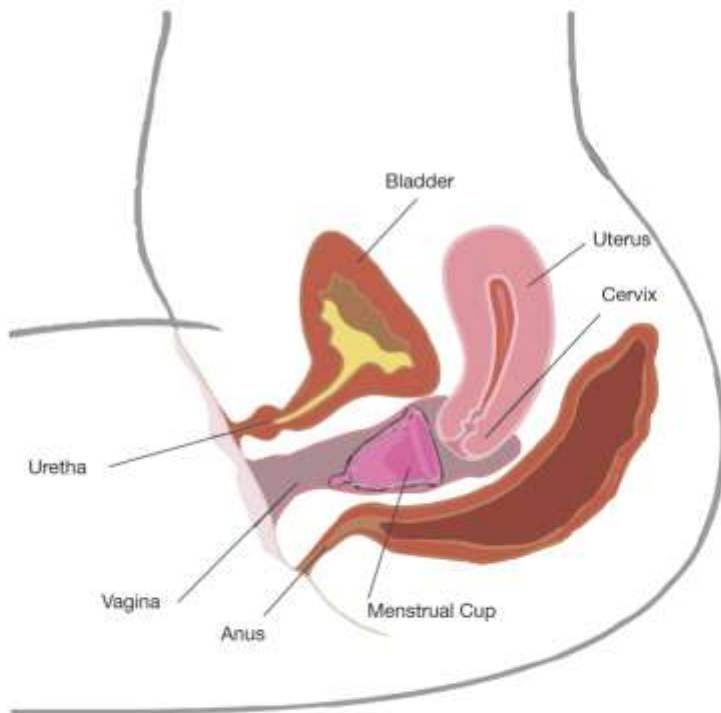
- Most common cause of leaking is the cup is not inserted correctly, it may take a few attempts or a few menstrual cycles.
- Some discomfort in the vaginal area can occur while inserting the cup (you may feel pinching or poking discomfort), but it should disappear once the cup has unfolded inside the vagina
- Relax and breathe as you insert your cup
- It can take up to 3 cycles to get used to using a menstrual cup, keep trying!
- Keep away from pets/animals and children
- You cannot use your cup as a contraceptive
- You cannot have sexual intercourse while a menstrual cup is inserted.
- If you have just given birth, make sure your body has healed and you feel comfortable before using a cup
- Do not use a cup if you have any bacterial or fungal infections that may be causing redness, rash, itching, pain, sores or swelling in the area, change in vaginal discharge or bad odour- seek medical attention first

Section 4: Q&A

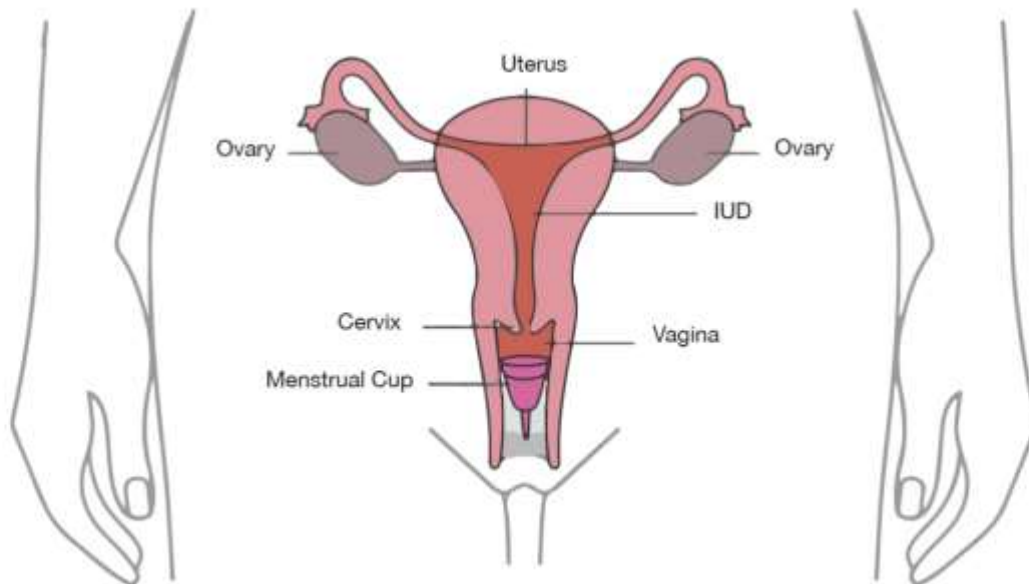
Make a note of commonly asked questions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If you have difficulty answering any of them, please contact Casey +265993786022



FRONT VIEW



Source: Project Everest Anatomical Drawings