



## Feminine Hygiene in Homeless Communities

We all know what “the time of the month” is, and most people have easy access to hygiene products that let that time pass by easily. It’s easy for us to walk into the nearest CVS and get a few boxes of pads, and a bit of pain medication for issues like cramps. If days get too overwhelming, we have the privilege of staying home and waiting for discomfort to subside, and we can make ourselves comfortable as we do so. We often take our easy access to feminine hygiene products for granted, but what do people that can’t afford these products do? More specifically, what do homeless people do when it comes to their period?

To many homeless people, feminine hygiene products become a luxury as many are unable to afford them as needed. Most homeless shelters will give out feminine hygiene products to occupants, however there is a shortage of them in shelters as they are often overlooked when it comes to necessities for homeless peoples. Homeless people’s need for feminine hygiene products such as pads and tampons are often ignored and not talked about, mainly due to the stigma surrounding a period. When homeless people aren’t given the feminine products they need, they make do with what is around them. Many are forced to use tissue and toilet paper, socks and rags, and anything that can keep their clothes from being dirtied. It can not only leave them mentally damaged, as this process could leave them feeling vulnerable or even helpless, but it can be physically dangerous as well. Toilet paper and rags aren’t necessarily clean and long lasting enough to be safe and viable options for feminine hygiene. Specifically reusable options, such as rags and old socks, are oftentimes the most dangerous as they can lead to infections that can weaken the immune system.

The issue of homeless people being unable to afford feminine hygiene products eventually leads back to the unfair prices of feminine hygiene products. It’s a debate you’ve most

probably heard about with one side arguing that feminine hygiene products are a necessity and therefore shouldn't be taxed and should even be given out for free more often and the other side arguing against the unfair 'handouts' lessening these prices would create. The prices of feminine hygiene products are excessive, and despite some states in America getting rid of the feminine hygiene tax, many people still find themselves unable to afford feminine hygiene products whether homeless or otherwise. While homeless shelters may give out feminine hygiene products as needed, many homeless people don't have access to said shelters and the resources they provide, and are forced to make do themselves. In the end, feminine hygiene products are a necessity and the prices of them have to be seriously reduced if not abolished entirely. We also need to do what we can with donations either to shelters or directly to homeless people. While an uncomfortable topic, the discussion regarding homeless people and their access to feminine hygiene products is something that has to be had, and something that has to be remedied. It's ridiculous how homeless people are forced to 'get crafty' when it comes to their period, something they can't even control themselves. This, unlike many other issues I often write about, is something we can help fight against ourselves with donations and the spreading of awareness. While we may not be able to force the government to lower the prices of feminine hygiene products, we can always donate a bit of money and maybe a few pads to those that really need it.

Written by:  
Layla Nahavandi