

INFORMATION FOR SEX WORKERS ONLY

**Your period is due and you want to keep working.....
what can you do?**

When you have your period it's not always possible or convenient to take time off work, so you will need to be extra safe during this time. The uterus is more susceptible to infection while you're menstruating and the blood flow that occurs during your period means that bacteria may be more likely to find their way to the uterus. You are also at a greater risk of contracting a Blood Borne Virus (BBV), so be extra aware of hygiene at this time and only ever insert clean objects into the vagina.

1. Beppy Sponges or stringless tampons

These sponges are purpose made for holding back menstrual flow and can be used up to a maximum of 8 hours depending on the heaviness of blood flow. The sponges are individually wrapped and sterile for *single use*, are lightweight with high absorption and are available in 2 sizes. You do not need to remove and clean Beppy sponges in between clients.

Discard the sponge into the rubbish at the end of a shift or sooner if you are losing any blood vaginally. Always use a new sponge at the beginning of each shift.

How to use sponges

- ◆ Wash your hands and be careful if you have long fingernails not to scratch yourself.
- ◆ Pre-moisten the sponge with some lube or warm water to help make insertion easier.
- ◆ Hold the sponge between your thumb and index finger (For Beppys have hollow side facing up).
- ◆ In either a squat or semi squat position (on the toilet is ideal) gently push the sponge into your vagina with your index finger. The hollow side of the Beppy sponge should be touching your cervix.

How to remove

- ◆ Wash your hands and be careful if you have long fingernails not to scratch yourself.
- ◆ In either a squat or semi squat position (on the toilet is ideal) use your index finger and middle finger as tweezers- pinch the sponge and gently pull it out of your vagina.
- ◆ Dispose of the sponge in the bin. **Do not flush down the toilet.**

The Lost Sponge?

- ◆ Don't panic!!!
- ◆ The sponge cannot travel to any other part of your body.
- ◆ It is most likely caught between your cervix and vaginal wall.
- ◆ Try squatting on the floor (this opens up your pelvis more) and feel for the sponge with your finger.
- ◆ Having a warm bath may fill the sponge with water and make it heavier, this may help it to move down in the vagina and be easier to reach.
- ◆ If you still cannot remove the sponge you can resort to hands on (with gloves!) peer support or see a health professional who can easily remove it in the clinic.
- ◆ DO NOT attempt to use any foreign instruments to remove the sponge.

2. Diaphragm

A diaphragm is a rubber dome shaped barrier method of contraception (It does not prevent sexually transmissible infections) and needs to be fitted by a doctor or FPWA nurse. It can be used to hold back menstrual flow and it is recommended that you remove and wash the diaphragm every 4 hrs when working. Diaphragms need to be stored in a dry clean container away from heat and sunlight and can last up to 2 years. If your weight changes by more than 5kgs (gain or lose) the diaphragm needs to be refitted.

Another thing.....some workers use red or pink condoms at this time of the month!!!

Sea Sponges (Yes, they come from the ocean)

These are not recommended for a few reasons: they are not sterile and contain bits of sand and grit from the ocean that could be abrasive to the vagina; they can fall apart and bits of the sponge could remain in your vagina. For your own health and safety it is recommended that if you have to work during your menstrual cycle, Beppy sponges are a safer and more effective sponge to use.

Never re-insert any sponges soaked in Dettol, bleach or any similar solutions. This could harm the lining of your vagina and lead to increased risk of infection to yourself.

Ways to protect yourself from clients' body fluids

As well as condoms, there are a number of ways to protect yourself from client's body fluids:

- **Finger Cotts**

These are small condom-like covers for the fingers and are used any time you penetrate another person's body. They are for once only use then should be thrown into the rubbish.

- **Gloves**

Gloves come in small, medium and large sizes and are for clients wanting hand relief, inserting more than 1 finger into the body and fisting. They are for once only use then throw into the rubbish.

- **Dental Dams**

Dental Dams are used to cover the genitals or anus when you perform or receive oral sex. A bit of lube on the dam can help it stay in place and prevent it slipping. Some workers use a garter to hold the dam in place too.

- ❖ ***Explain to the client that you can only perform a service using protection; this is for their benefit as well as your own.***
- ❖ ***It is illegal in WA to perform any sexual act that involves the transmission of body fluids without using protection such as those described in this brochure as well as condoms.***
- ❖ ***All products can be purchased from Magenta.***