

# WOMENA RECOMMENDATIONS

Many women develop urogenital infections, such as bacterial vaginosis or yeast infections, at some point in their life.

Prevalence rates of 20-30% or more have been documented in both high-, middle- and low-income countries. Many infections are asymptomatic, meaning that those who have the infection do not know.

Menstruation is a normal, physiologic process that does not, by itself, cause infection.

However, the products or practices used to absorb or contain menstrual blood could potentially increase the risk of infection. The key questions are: How serious is that risk? Are any products or practices, particularly using menstrual cups, more or less likely to cause infection?

There are only few studies which evaluate this.

Some products that need to be washed and dried (washable pads or cloth) seem slightly more likely to be associated with infection. This may depend on the product type and content, as some washable pads dry in 2 hours, others in 4 hours or longer. It also depends on how girls and women use the products, for example, if single-use disposable pads are washed and reused (to save money), this could increase exposure to infections. It is therefore important to distinguish between ideal use (according to manufacturer guidelines) and typical use (how products are actually used).

**For menstrual cups, we found no studies indicating that they are associated with increased risk of infection. The opposite is true: one study shows that using cups is associated with lower levels of infection than disposable pads, and providing free products - cups or pads - is associated with lower levels of sexually transmitted infections**