

Elle Cup is a proudly South African brand. Please note that all the below information is *advice*.

## What is a menstrual cup?

A menstrual cup is an alternative to conventional disposable products such as sanitary towels and tampons. The cup is made of soft silicon and can be reused each month when you have your period. The cup collects the menstrual blood inside your body rather than absorbing it like a pad or tampon.

## What size?

Elle Cup currently offers two sizes. The larger size is usually for women over 30, those who have had children or those with a heavy flow. The smaller size should be used by all other women and girls.

## How does it work?

The Elle Cup is soft and flexible, it is inserted into the vagina, close to the opening (this is very different positioning to a tampon which is usually placed much higher inside the vagina). The cup will open up inside the vagina and create a small seal or vacuum which does not allow any blood to pass through. All of the blood is collected inside the cup. When you need to remove the cup you can push it down using your pelvic muscles and pull on the stem to remove it from your body. Each time you take it out, empty it into the toilet, sink, shower or bath and rinse in clean water before reinserting. The menstrual cup is very durable and you can use it for several years (up to 15 years), you don't need other products and you will produce no rubbish!

## How do you insert it?

To insert the menstrual cup you can fold it in several different ways to make it small enough to enter the vagina. Which way is the most comfortable depends on the user and it is worth experimenting with a few different methods.

Elle Cup recommends two folds.

### The punch down fold



### The C Fold



Once folded, ensuring you have clean hands push the cup inside your vagina but do not insert too far. The stem of the cup should be just inside the vagina opening and if the stem feels too long it may be trimmed, again this depends on what feels most comfortable for the user as we are all different shapes and sizes. Once inside twist a little and use a finger to circle the outside of the cup ensuring it is fully open and a seal can be created. Make sure it is in a comfortable position for yourself.

## How to remove the menstrual cup?

The best position for removal is either crouching or sitting as this shortens the length of the vaginal canal, use your natural pelvic muscles to push the cup down a little. Relax your muscle and stay calm. Try and feel the stem with a finger. If it is not within reach do not panic. Gently use your muscles again to push the cup down and try again. When you can feel the stem gently pull it down until you can reach the bottom of the cup with a finger and thumb. At this point, pinch the bottom of the cup with your finger and thumb to break the seal. It is very important to break the seal as there is quite a lot of suction and you may not be able to move it without this step. You should now be able to manoeuvre the cup with your finger and fold the cup into a similar fold as seen for inserting for extraction.

## How often should you empty your cup?

The cup can be used for more than 12 hours, however it is best practise to empty it every 4- 8 hours depending on your flow. Menstrual cups have never been associated with toxic shock syndrome as they are completely inert and do not have any fibres on them.

## When and how do you clean your cup?

You should clean your cup before use and after taking it out before reinsertion. You should rinse with clean water, if there is no clean water available you can wipe with toilet tissue and reinsert. However next time clean water is available you should rinse it.

Between your periods you should sterilize your cup with the Elle Disinfectant spray. If you run out of the spray, you can either boil it in a pot of water for 5 to 10 minutes and add a teaspoon of salt. You should ensure that the cup does not touch the bottom of the pot (as this can burn or melt it) by using sufficient water. You can also use steriliser tablets such as Milton's. Ensure that the cup is well rinsed in clean water after this. If you run out of spray, you can order more on [www.ellecup.org](http://www.ellecup.org)

Discoloration of your cup is normal but should not happen if you use the Elle disinfectant spray after every cycle. Do not put your cup in the dishwasher. Do not use soap or detergents as this will irritate the skin.

## Is it easy to use?

Yes but it can take some time to get used to. Do not give up after your first attempt. It may feel very different from any other type of product you've used in the past. You may experience some leaking during your first few attempts, this could be due to the cup not being fully open or positioned right. If the cup feels uncomfortable return to the bathroom and readjust, you may also need to shorten the stem of the cup. If you are having difficulty removing the cup it may be due to your muscles being tense, we recommend trying to relax if you are still having problems go do something else before returning to removal once you are more relaxed.

When inserted correctly the cup is very comfortable and often you will even forget you are using it, as it heats up with your body temperature the silicon softens. After 3 or 4 cycles you will know what angle and position is correct for your body.

## The cup is very different. Why should I change my type of sanitary protection to it?

Yes the cup is different but sometimes change is a good thing. The advantages of using a cup are numerous. Firstly you don't need to worry about buying pads or tampons all the time. You only need one small cup carried in a small container. Environmentally you will be producing no waste for the next 10-15 years

and you don't have to worry about what is happening to that waste. Cost saving, although it has a higher initial cost a menstrual cup pays for itself within 6 months compared to what you would spend on disposables. You need to change your protection less frequently, interrupting your day less. You will have no smells, as menstrual blood only smells once it comes into contact with air. You should have no leaks as a seal is formed and nothing can pass this seal. Anecdotally, many women have talked of benefits of less menstrual cramps and shorter periods when using the cup. A menstrual cup is very convenient and comfortable!



## Other points to note:

- The cup is **not** a means of contraception nor does it protect against sexually transmitted diseases.
- The cup does **not** 'remove' a person's virginity.
- The cup can be used with IUDs or diaphragms.
- You do **not** have to remove the cup at night.
- The cup is **not** associated with toxic shock syndrome.



*Elle International is a social enterprise which is aiming to tackle the taboos surrounding menstruation and sanitation. We empower women and girls to manage their menstruation more effectively. Firstly, raising awareness of the environmental issues, by selling sustainable menstrual hygiene products in SA. Secondly, by investing 100% of these profits into training and education surrounding menstrual hygiene, its tools and practices. Additionally, developing innovative and sustainable products which will improve overall vaginal and menstrual health management.*

[www.ellecup.org](http://www.ellecup.org)

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