



Coalition Aims

The Environmenstrual Coalition welcomes all organisations, businesses, waste authorities, campaigners, universities, community-based groups and related organisations that share the vision of a world where healthy, eco-friendly menstrual products are the norm.

These below aims are intended to provide both a framework to support individual action by each Environmenstrual Coalition partner and an outline of the coalition's commitment to collective action. The initial focus of the aims is on UK activities, recognising that organisations working outside of the UK are likely to apply these or similar aims in a way that is appropriate to their country context.

We recognise that because of the different sizes and starting points of various organisations, each partner will need to apply the aims and take action in different ways.

As partners of the Environmenstrual Coalition, we commit to:

- Work towards a world free of plastic pollution from period products
- Agree to support, promote and amplify the annual Environmenstrual Week of Action (EWOA)
- Work towards eliminating the single-use plastic footprint and toxic chemicals generated from period products, at source and throughout the manufacturing supply chain
- Work towards increasing access to sustainable, environmentally friendly period products for everyone
- Champion toxic-free, reusable and organic period products
- Work collaboratively to engage in the public debate on #PlasticFreePeriods and to develop, apply and promote best practice across the menstrual product industry
- Participate in Coalition information exchanges and attend coalition events when possible
- Act as a resource for other members of the coalition
- Recruit new members to the Coalition in order to increase our collective efforts

If your organisation represents these aims, please complete the below form and someone from the Environmenstrual team will contact you regarding your application.

Thank you for your interest in joining the Environmenstrual Coalition.

Joining the Environmenstrual Coalition offers:

- Access to shared knowledge and to networks within the #PlasticFreePeriods movement
- Access to materials and resources to support action and improve period education on healthy, eco-friendly menstrual products
- The opportunity to collaborate on joint initiatives and activism

- Opportunities to communicate commitment to acting on healthy, eco-friendly menstrual products, to influence key stakeholders in the menstrual products industry and government legislation
- Benefit from expert advice and support on integrating best practice on #PlasticFreePeriods in your organisation's work.
- Promote your organisation's relevant priorities, publicising your own events and resources across the Coalition.
- Receive priority access to all Coalition events such as the annual Environmenstrual Festival and Week of Action
- Stay up-to-date on the latest Environmenstrual news by receiving the monthly Coalition newsletter
- Share and develop ideas with other experts by joining the group e-mailing list (coming soon)

Membership Criteria

In 2004, Wen (Women's Environmental Network) coined the term 'environmenstrual' and in 2018 the Environmenstrual Coalition was created. We have seen the coalition grow to over 60 organisations, companies and campaigners in just two years – all working to provide healthy, eco-friendly menstrual products for all across the UK and beyond.

As the coalition grows, there is a need to set standards including a review of coalition membership criteria. We envision a coalition in which all members have incorporated ethical and sustainable standards into the way they operate.

Coalition members must now meet the following criteria to be eligible to join the coalition. A dedicated and experienced team will check each individual member application against the criteria, and query any potential inclusion of ingredients including, but not limited to, single-use plastic. We support full transparency.

Plastic

Polyurethane Laminate (PUL)

While the Environmenstrual Coalition promotes "plastic-free periods", we recognise that there are some reusable menstrual products such as washable pads and period pants that are made from layers of fabric with an absorbent inner core, and these often have a waterproof membrane made from polyurethane laminate (PUL). It is understood that this a trade off some companies have made in order to make their reusable products functional and leakproof, and significantly minimises waste compared to their disposable counterparts.

Coalition membership approval for companies that use PUL in their products will be subject to transparent disclosure of such ingredients and intentions must be demonstrated for improving manufacturer practices at source.

Applicators

Greenpeace Research Laboratories has conducted [new research](#) and found that global brands are selling 'plant-based' tampon applicators which are actually polyethylene – and will behave identically in the environment to oil-based plastic applicators – they will never biodegrade.

Tampon applicators sold by eight brands were tested. Five were marketed as ordinary (oil-based) plastic and three were marketed as 'plant-based' plastic. All eight applicators were polyethylene at the end result.

Natracare asked consumers what they thought when they read the words 'plant-based plastic' and 78% thought that it meant 'a compostable and biodegradable alternative to plastic'.

This blatant greenwashing in the menstrual product industry is misleading women and people who menstruate to believe they are making the environmental choice when they are not.

If your company produces applicators that are environmentally persistent in the same way oil-based applicators are, we are afraid that your membership application will not move forward unless you are committing to phase out this aspect of your products line.

Harmful chemicals

Cotton

Many menstrual products are largely made out of cotton. A lot of cotton grown in the world is genetically modified, which allows farmers to grow in monocultures using a much higher concentration of pesticides and other chemical inputs. We therefore expect companies selling cotton products to have policies and procedures in place to ensure their cotton isn't produced using GM, pesticides or forced labour.

Many conventional disposable menstrual products are bleached white, and this process creates the chemical dioxin, a known endocrine disruptor. Many women have reported adverse allergic reactions to the synthetic ingredients, fragrances and plastics in disposable menstrual products. Just as in cosmetics, fragrances can be comprised of allergens, sensitisers and phthalates (a class of chemicals that has been linked to hormone disruption), which can affect development and fertility.

Wen encourages producers to use organically certified cotton.

Antimicrobials

The world of menstrual products has recently grown with innovations such as menstrual pants and reusable applicators, but it may be that the rush to innovate has outstripped health and safety considerations. There are obviously big advantages in reducing menstrual waste by using reusable products, but unfortunately, some continue to perpetuate the same old menstrual taboos i.e. that periods smell by adding antimicrobials or antibacterials to menstrual products. WEN is questioning why these are necessary in these products? There are huge gaps in information about how these additives could affect the vagina or the good bacteria that make it the effective self-cleansing organ it is.

One such example of such an additive is nanosilver – which is basically very, very tiny particles of silver – these tiny particles can pass through the skin, accumulate in our body causing unknown health impacts while also causing allergic reactions. Nanosilver is toxic to fish and other creatures that live in our waterways and oceans and has been steadily building up in the environment since its addition to clothing. Studies have questioned the effectiveness of silver

particles, showing that 60% of the silver is washed out after only 10 washes or that it provides no protection initially.

Questions need to be asked about the unwarranted addition of antimicrobials or antibacterials to menstrual products including what kind of effect they have on healthy vaginal microbes.

If you would like to be a member of the Environmenstrual Coalition, but your organisation currently produces products that contain antimicrobials, please provide us with some kind of guarantee to move away from using them in your application.

Women's Voices for the Earth has a factsheet about nanotech fibres, often used as antibacterials in period underwear here:

<https://www.womensvoices.org/2019/04/24/concerns-nanosilver-period-underwear-pads/>

Approval Process

Applications will be reviewed by Helen Lynn, Wen's Health Adviser, and Natasha Piette-Basheer, the Environmenstrual Campaign Manager and other relevant staff on a monthly basis and checked against the criteria.

The Environmenstrual Coalition itself will be reviewed against the aims annually through a survey to partners, to reflect ongoing learning and emerging good practice, and to reflect the increased maturity of the plastic-free periods movement and its collective contribution to improved access to healthy, eco-friendly menstrual products for all.

Suggested Annual Coalition Membership Donation

- Annual income under £500k **£50**
- Annual income £500k- 1million **£100**
- Annual income £1-19million) **£175**
- Annual income £20million+ **£250**

Wen is a small women's environmental charity, and appreciates your generous contribution to help us continue to convene the Environmenstrual Coalition.

How to apply

Please send us your company logo to natasha@wen.org.uk and [complete the Environmenstrual Coalition Member Application Form here](#) and make your [donation](#).