

Planning for your period on a DofE expedition



DofE expeditions are an immensely exciting time for everyone – there are lots of thrilling new experiences and inevitably you'll come across new problems that will give you a sense of pride when you overcome them. However, 50% of the population also have an extra challenge to deal with – periods.

Your period can be annoying and stressful at the best of times – being on your expedition is no exception. So, here are some hints and tips to help you get the most out of the DofE experience, despite your period.

Plan ahead

Work out the days of your expedition and when your period is due. Even if it's not due, it might be a good idea to take supplies anyway, just in case it's a few days early or someone else in your group gets caught off guard.

Be prepared

What does that mean? Take plenty of pads or tampons – way more than you think you might need. It might also be a good idea to take a separate waterproof wash bag with wipes, spare underwear, lots of pads, tampons or whatever you use for your period and bags or containers to put the waste in. Don't forget your usual painkillers and hot water bottles or heat pads if you have bad cramps. When you arrive at camp for the night, the first thing you might want to do is change your pad or tampon so it's a great idea to have your wash bag somewhere easily accessible where you can find it quickly.

Bring a small flannel skirt

If you need to go to the toilet or sort things out for your period in the middle of the countryside, a small flannel skirt gives you the comfort of doing it more discreetly, as don't forget you'll probably be wearing trousers. Simply wear the skirt over your trousers when you need to change. Also, you could tell the others in your team what's happening – they'll understand and be there for you.

Drink lots of water

Bringing that two litres of water per day is especially important when you're on your period. Stay hydrated throughout the day by drinking little and often, not all at once.

Factor in timings

There are lots of different tampons, sanitary towels and other products available that cater for different flow rates and offer various levels of protection. Factor in how often you think you might have an opportunity to change and make sure your expedition is not the first time you use a new brand of pad or tampon. You could even try using a reusable menstrual cup like a Mooncup as it would reduce waste and mean you have less things to carry.

Food is important

While eating healthy food will get you through an expedition, don't underestimate the pick-up power of a Mars Bar – it can give you that perfect energy boost. However, the most important thing is to eat healthily throughout the day – so try cooking proper pasta instead of instant noodles for dinner. Eating enough of the right foods can make all the difference.

Sleep is your friend

It's easy to fight the urge to sleep and stay up chatting with your friends, but getting the recommended eight hours of sleep is especially important while on your period. Enough sleep means you'll be well rested and have enough energy and concentration for the exciting day ahead. To help make the most of your sleeping time you could pack some ear plugs to block out any noise around you or an eye mask to block out the sun. In the summer months, an eye mask might be particularly important, as the sunlight can shine through your tent very early in the morning and wake you up, meaning you could miss those extra morning hours of sleep.

Periods are a natural, healthy part of life. Just remember that finishing your DofE expedition is an amazing achievement (without and especially with a period) so shout about it and be proud.

It's okay to find managing your period hard, but you can do it!