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Varina Kosovich

University of New Mexico Health Science's Library and Informatics Center

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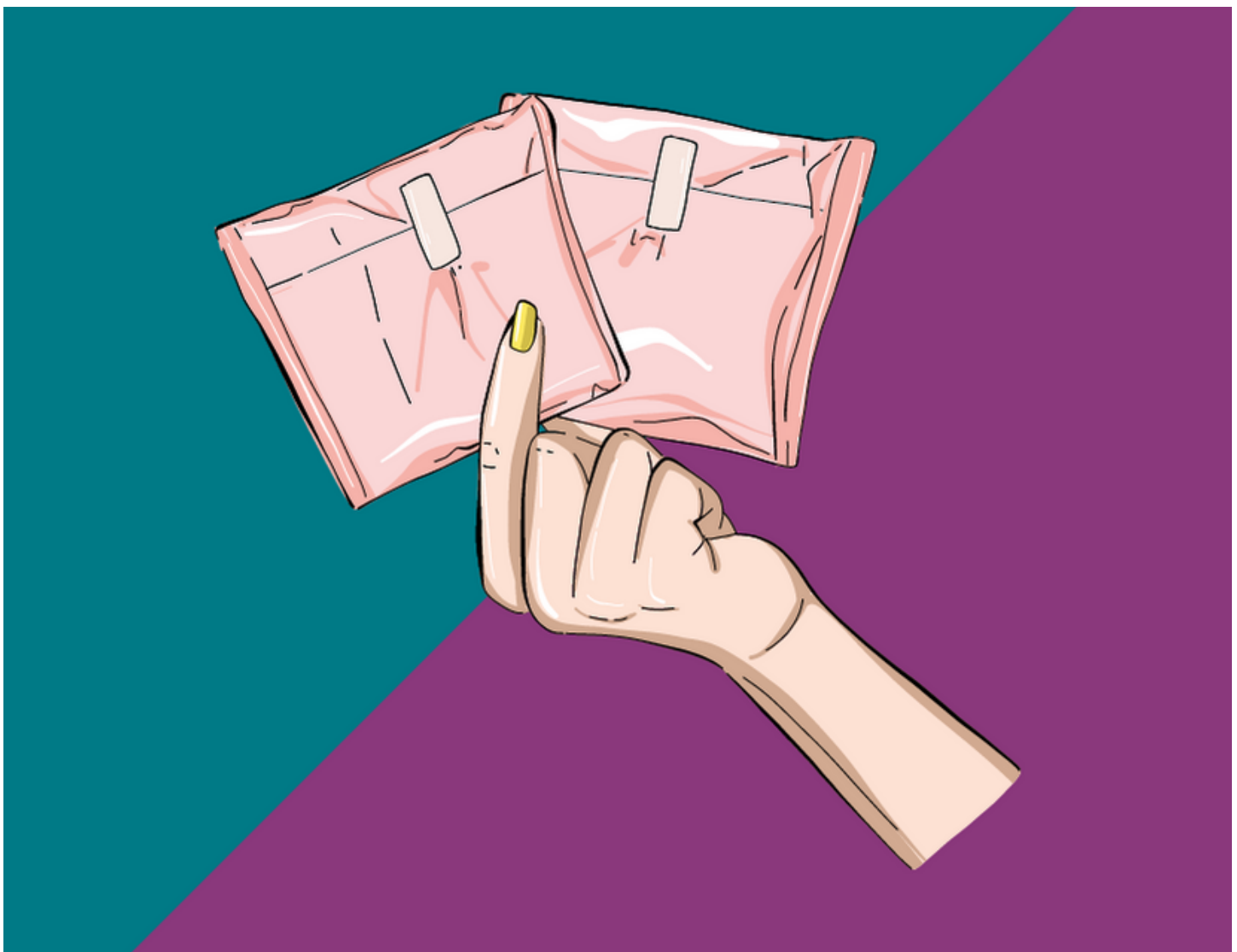
HSLIC News - LibGuides at University of New Mexico

Let's Talk About Menstrual Equity

by Varina Kosovich on March 18th, 2022 | [0 Comments](#)

This post is in conjunction with Women's History Month and the upcoming presentation by MD-PhD Candidate Amanda Collar on March 22nd from 12pm-1pm: "Addressing Menstrual Equity at the Health Sciences Center" ([register here](#)).

If you need access to menstrual products on the North Campus they are available for free at the Health Sciences Library and at [Vassar House](#).



If you've visited the Health Sciences Library over the last few months you may have noticed there are now free menstrual products in all six restrooms. Last semester, a student left a note in one the

restrooms expressing frustration about the lack of access to these products on North Campus. We were so grateful for this feedback and immediately understood the impact this could have on someone's day. The library's [Justice Equity, and Inclusion Committee](#) decided to make it one of our priorities to provide free access to menstrual products, and we got to work researching initiatives at other institutions, securing funding, and selecting products. Since the program began, we've heard positive feedback from both students and the faculty and staff at the library who volunteer to keep the products stocked. Providing these products is part of a larger conversation about menstrual health and the challenges people who menstruate must navigate.

Why place products in all restrooms?

Since the library does not yet have gender-neutral restrooms, it was important to provide period products that all people who menstruate can access, including transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming folks. According to the [ACLU](#), period products are "almost never available in men's restrooms, even for pay. Men's restrooms are also less likely to have a place to dispose of these products conveniently, privately, and hygienically." It's also important to reduce the stigma of period products and placing products in the men's room can help to start a conversation about menstrual health.

How much do products cost and what is period poverty?

Have you ever heard of the tampon tax? It is a sales tax applied to menstrual products or rather the "failure of the state to otherwise exempt these products from sales tax by placing them in the category of necessity." ([ACLU-Toolkit](#)). Menstruation is a natural biological occurrence and menstrual products are absolutely a health necessity. New Mexico legislators [just voted](#) to get rid of the tampon tax in the state, something advocates have been working on for years. While this is encouraging, the cost of period products is still a huge burden for many people who menstruate.

It's been estimated that a person who menstruates can spend [\\$15-\\$20](#) per cycle on menstrual products, not including the cost of pain management, medications, and other period management items. This averages out to thousands of dollars over a person's lifetime. For folks who may be experiencing financial hardship or those who are currently unhoused, this can be an overwhelming cost to pay for something so crucial to health and well-being. According to [Medical News Today](#), period poverty is a "lack of access to menstrual products, education, hygiene facilities, waste management, of a combination of these. It affects an average of 500 million people worldwide." This lack of access has an impact of both physical and mental health, and can cause a person to feel shame about their situation and even increase the risk of depression.

How can we support menstrual health for everyone?

Not only is menstrual health an important part of a person's overall well-being, [Gruer, et al.](#) state

that “menstrual equity is an issue of gender equity and of social justice, assuring those with lesser means can access products and manage their periods with dignity and comfort.” We must center LGBTQIA+ folks, folks experiencing financial hardship, people who are currently unhoused, and incarcerated people in these conversations. There are different ways to get involved, from contacting your legislators about menstrual equity initiatives, donating to groups that provide products to people who need them, or just educating yourself about issues that people who menstruate face. Below are local groups who accept donations of menstrual products and in addition to the sources linked above, some suggestions for further reading.

Street Safe New Mexico- [Donations](#)

Transgender Resource Center- [Donations](#)

Crossroads for Women- [Donations](#)

New Mexico- [Find My Legislator](#)

Article- [Period poverty and mental health implications among college-aged women in the United States](#)

Article- [Periods are Unnecessarily Gendered](#)

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