



# OPEN GOLD DUKE OF EDINBURGH EXPEDITIONS 2021

Guidance for a successful expedition

There's unlikely to be one girl, be she a student, teacher or Trainer, who has not at some point worried about having her period when away from home. So firstly, let us start by saying you're not alone! BUT your period should not stand in your way, nor should any matter relating to women's health. Think about all those amazing women who have taken part in experiences like this before you and those who will continue to do so. Also consider what a privileged place you're in as a female living in a western society where sanitary products are readily accessible, running water is on tap (pardon the pun!) and hygiene is easy to manage.



**wilderness** expertise

Now, clearly if you're spending several days camping in the wilds of the UK, hygiene becomes harder to manage, water is less 'on tap' and things get a whole load more challenging and no doubt this is what will be worrying you. Worry not!

This aide memoir is designed to tackle the most common female matters in relation to spending a few days away from mod cons, so that you can feel more prepared and confident take part in your programme without such things impacting negatively on your experience.

## **Periods**

The longest you will be away from mod cons on any UK programme is around 4 days and this is normally for Gold DofE, therefore the following may not be pertinent for you at all but it's worth informing you of.

Some girls will choose to prevent having a period at all when away from mod cons and this is personal choice. This can be done in a number of ways (e.g. consistent taking of the contraceptive pill, one pack into another or taking Norethisterone). We neither recommend nor discourage either practice BUT we do strongly advise that you consult with your GP about this before making any decision. It should also be something you trial before you take part in your programme – never start something new as you're about to head off for 4 days of DofE!

Sometimes those with horribly heavy period pains may choose this method as the pain and debilitation of having a period is too great to even consider when away from home/school.

Everyone is different but it really is advised that you consult your GP for personal advice.

If you do have your period when you're on your UK programme here are some practical tips which can help you:

- Make sure you take enough sanitary products with you for the duration of your period plus a few spares. You are unlikely to get time to shop for these if you forget them (although we will do our best to get you supplies should you not have enough!)

- Take with you a decent supply of nappy sacks/sandwich bags! If you think toilet paper is a hideous thing to see flapping in the wind of a beautiful remote spot, imagine the horror of finding someone's used sanitary product. Not only is that gross it's also dreadful for the environment. Always pack out and dispose of any sanitary product when you find an appropriate place to do so (your Trainer can advise you of a suitable place to dispose of waste)
- Consider your options; tampons with or without applicator, pads, Moon Cup? Whatever you do choose to take, make sure this is not your 1st rodeo! Be aware of the product and how to use it so you're not unduly stressed by suddenly trying something new.
- Feminine wipes (e.g. Femfresh) or other moist wipes can be a God send! They will make you feel so much fresher and cleaner so these are worth packing (they're also good to use when you're not able to shower often). Staying fresh 'down there' is important for health reasons.
- Hand sanitiser is another good thing to have part of your 'toilet kit'; particularly before and after removing or inserting/changing any sanitary product
- If you are prone to thrush you may want to carry some Canesten cream or similar. If this is something which regularly affects you please speak to your GP about how best to manage this
- Thin scented panty liners can be very helpful. They obviously shouldn't be used as your sole sanitary product but can be worn at the same time (or even just day to day when not on your period). They help you feel fresh and clean and something that smells nice is always quite nice to have to hand to make you feel better
- Non cotton underwear; synthetic material dries much quicker than cotton and means you can quickly wash your underwear and get it dried to re-use relatively quickly
- Painkillers and heat pads may be something you want to consider taking if you suffer bad period cramps. You can get stuck on heat pads and they can be very effective
- Mood swings can happen at the best of times, let alone when you're on your period or in the run up to it. The best thing to do is seek support from a team mate and make your Trainer or teacher aware of the fact that you're feeling

rubbish. Pre-empt any possible PMT issues by taking with you something to comfort you; e.g. a small teddy, something that smells nice from home, a photo of your cat or some chocolate as a treat. Remember that personal TLC is also important.

Have a look at this American You Tube video which we think is quite helpful about periods and travelling away from mod cons. Please note that some things are irrelevant and it is tailored to field research trips but it's still a good watch. NB; we do not allow burning of waste paper (which is referenced in this video):

*<https://youtu.be/jjFZ1nziejrl>*

Speak to your Trainer or teacher if you need any support. Do not be afraid to speak up! They are there to support you be they male or female.

## **The Call of Nature**

This is not just female specific of course! But often girls worry about using the toilet when they're away from what they're used to more than boys do, so we wanted to give you some information on it.

You are going to have to go to the toilet 'in the wild' on your Gold DofE (and perhaps as part of other training or the specific programme you're involved in). These toilet experiences may be alien to you but it's vitally important for your health and wellbeing that you're not worried about going to the toilet or about eating and drinking as you would normally to keep yourself well in day-to-day life.

Sometimes students will reduce their fluid or food intake to limit their need to go to the loo. This is dangerous and puts you at risk of more significant issues such as extreme dehydration and potential hospitalisation. Squatting over a hole you've dug for yourself with the Brecon Beacons in sight surely sounds much simpler than a hospital trip and being put on a drip - right?!

When you go for a wee in the wild do so at least 200m away from any water source (you may be getting your drinking water from that clear running stream later!). Take what you need to clean yourself up (paper, wipes, sanitary products etc.) – don't be caught short without those if you need them! Also remember to take a nappy sack/sandwich bag (biodegradable recommended) so that you can carry out your used sanitary products or toilet paper/wipes.

When you go for a poo, again take all you need to clean yourself up. Moist wipes can be a godsend as help you feel fresh and clean. Don't forget those nappy sacks for packing out the paper! It's not pleasant – of course not – but it is environmentally friendly and that's crucial. We have a 'no burn' policy too so you simply must pack out.

If you have to poo in the wild (no toilet hole already made) you should again locate yourself 200m from any water source and then dig a small hole approx. 6 inches deep (basically this is just a bit bigger than the length of a standard iPhone!) using a trowel/small shovel. After going about your business fill in the hole with the mud/soil you dug out and ensure it's lightly pressed down and looks like it was before you dug it up (as best as possible).

Remember that whatever happens you're not alone! Your UK programme should be an amazing experience and being a girl should not negatively impact on that!

If you have any questions please get in touch with us at the Wilderness office.