

Press Release | New Study Compares Environmental Impacts of Period Products: Menstrual Cup Performs Best

A new life cycle assessment (LCA) study scientifically compared the environmental friendliness of menstrual cups to disposable products, such as pads and tampons. The study included both conventional period products (with high plastic content) and products made with organic cotton. The LCA investigated the impact of each period products' **entire life cycle** on the environment. This study was commissioned by einhorn and accompanied by independent menstruation and LCA experts.

Key Points of the Life Cycle Assessment Study:

- *Compared to the disposable products in the study, the menstrual cup has a smaller environmental footprint in most of the environmental categories.*
- *Since the primary environmental impact of the menstrual cup revolves around water and electricity use for regular cleaning, the findings can also be applied to derive tips for even more sustainable use of the menstrual cup.*
- *The outcome illustrates the great sustainability potential of reusable products, like the menstrual cup, and can be used by manufacturers to further develop environmentally friendly period products.*

Orientation in the Period Product Jungle

In recent years, numerous companies have launched new period products on the German-speaking market, including tampons and pads with organic cotton or menstrual cups. Currently, many consumers prefer to buy products advertised as environmentally friendly. But are organic tampons really better for the planet? Is the menstrual cup really a sustainable product? And how do pads and tampons made from organic cotton compare to conventional products? The life cycle assessment commissioned by einhorn answers these questions.

The LCA Also Examines Each Products' Period of Use, a Previously Neglected Factor

A life cycle assessment is a standardized, scientific method for measuring the possible environmental impact of a product. This new study, titled "Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Menstrual Products," compared products in 16 different environmental

categories. For the first time, scientists examined the **entire life cycle of each type of period product** — from the extraction and processing of raw materials, to production, transport and retail, to use and recycling at the end of the product’s life.

In previous studies of menstrual products, little attention has been paid to their period of use. Yet this is especially important for reusable products such as the menstrual cup, which must be regularly sterilized in boiling water, consuming energy and water. Among other things, the LCA shows that over 95% of the menstrual cup’s environmental performance is created during its use phase, mainly through cleaning. However, compared to conventional tampons and pads, it saves approximately 63% to 79% of environmentally harmful greenhouse gases over the course of a year.

In addition to analyzing different cleaning methods for the menstrual cup, other variables were addressed: What’s the outcome if the cup lasts 1 or 10 years, or if products are made with renewable energy, or if materials come from another country, or if disposable products are worn for 4 or 8 hours? The LCA becomes particularly solid with the inclusion of these and other points, especially because hardly any research exists on how the products are really used.

Menstrual Cups Do Not Need to Be Boiled for Minutes

Despite the factors mentioned above — energy and water consumption — the life cycle assessment shows that the menstrual cup is more ecologically sustainable than disposable products. Cordelia-Röders Arnold, Head of Menstruation at einhorn, has a tip for safely and ecologically cleaning the cup:

“A lot of energy can be saved on cleaning by pouring boiling water heated in an electric kettle over the menstrual cup when your period is over. Just cover it and let it steep for five minutes. Contrary to popular belief, it is *not* necessary to boil the menstrual cup in a pot without a lid for 20 minutes to disinfect it. The other way saves money, protects the environment and still leaves you with a cup that is safe to use.”

A recently published [study](#) supported by einhorn examined different cleaning methods and concluded that this method is, in fact, safe.

Improving Disposable Products & Focusing on Reusable Products

When it comes to environmental performance, menstrual cups clearly take first place in the assessment. Organic cotton tampons, conventional tampons and conventional sanitary napkins score in the middle and perform differently in each environmental category, e.g., organic cotton tampons tend to perform better than conventional ones. Decisive are the raw materials used and the quantities needed. Although the material used for organic cotton pads scored predominantly well for those tested, the relatively large amount of material needed for their production means they scored less favorably in many environmental categories. Based on the findings of this study, einhorn consulted with a new manufacturing partner to reduce the amount of material in organic cotton pads and panty liners, ultimately working to reduce the products' footprint. The new products will be available in stores come June 2022. In the future, the company plans to focus even more on reusable products. The full report on the LCA study can be found [here](#).

About einhorn

The young, Berlin-based start-up produces sustainable period products and condoms from regenerative agriculture. [einhorn](#) is committed to feminism, sustainability and fairness and works to ensure that both the people in its supply chain and the environment are being treated well. At least 50% of the profits go to social and sustainable projects. And for every kilogram of organic cotton used, 30 cents are donated to human rights projects in Tanzania. einhorn sees itself as part of a movement for a sustainable lifestyle with a sense of justice and communication at eye level. It's also about having fun with design and aesthetics. Plus, as part of the [Purpose Foundation](#), einhorn owns itself, can't be bought or sold and distributes its revenues nearly exclusively to nonprofit organizations. The company also lives the New Work ideal, functioning without formal hierarchies or fixed working hours and allowing employees to self-organize.

About the LCA Study

The life cycle assessment is based on a [Method of the European Commission](#), analyzing a total of 16 environmental impact categories, including climate change, water scarcity, resource consumption and land use. It was financed by einhorn and other partners for reusable and disposable products and developed by [GreenDelta](#). Three independent experts put the study through rigorous trials and found it to meet the international standard for life cycle assessments (ISO14040/44).

Further Information

[Link to the study and press material](#)

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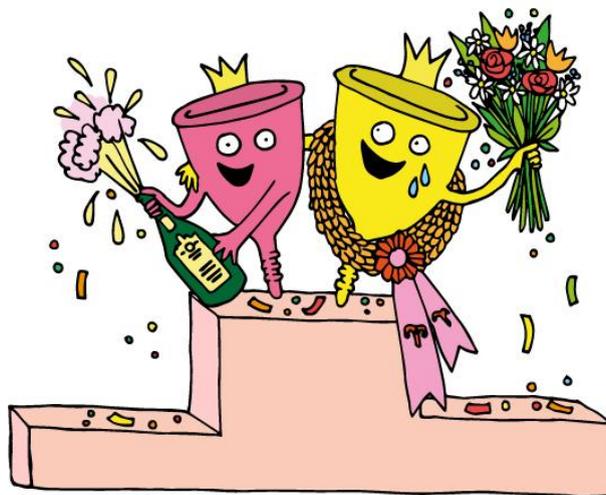


Illustration from Sandra Bayer (www.sandra-bayer.de)