

Nova Scotia

N.S. now providing free menstrual products in public schools

Products will be made available in 367 schools with grades 4 and up

[Alex Cooke](#) · CBC News · Posted: Sep 17, 2019 2:33 PM AT

Aya Ali has had classmates miss school because of their periods.

The Grade 12 student at Halifax West High School said schoolwork shouldn't be affected by a natural thing that happens every month, but without proper access to menstrual products, some students are getting left behind.

"I know many students who left class, missed class, or missed a test because of that," said Ali, a student with the Halifax West Health Action Team.

"I know students too embarrassed to tell a teacher why, and it's all because... they don't have access to menstrual products."

On Tuesday, the province announced that free menstrual products are now available for public school students across Nova Scotia.

Province wide initiative

The initiative was announced at Halifax West.

"When students come to school, they should be focused on learning," said Zach Churchill, minister of education and early childhood development.

"No student should come to school and worry about where or how they will access menstrual products."

Churchill said there are now about 40,000 students between grades 4 and 12 in 367 schools across the province who could potentially access free pads and tampons.

"I think this will help learning because it takes away the anxiety associated and [the] stigma associated with accessing menstrual products when they're needed," he said.

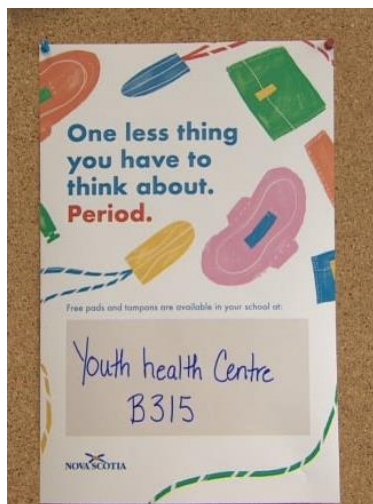
Education Minister Zach Churchill says many schools already offer free menstrual products, but the government wants to make sure this availability is consistent across the province. (Preston Mulligan/CBC)

While he said many schools already offer free menstrual products, he said the government wants to make sure this availability is consistent across the province.

Churchill also said it's up to the different schools to decide how and where these products will be made available.

All schools will be provided with posters that they can fill in to indicate where students can find menstrual products.

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All schools with grades 4 and up will be provided with these posters to tell students where they can find the menstrual products. (Preston Mulligan/CBC)

Churchill said the costs of the initiative will be handled by the regional centres of education. He also said some corporate partners are donating items.

Ali said the initiative will help alleviate the stress some students may feel when it comes to their time of the month, and it will allow students with tight budgets to spend their money on other essentials.

"Accessing free menstrual products at school means you are always prepared, because [an] emergency can happen to anyone in our school," she said.

"Our Health Action team talks about health being equal to all students. If students do not have [to] worry about this, they can focus [on] their studying and do better in their class."



Halifax West student Aya Ali says the initiative will help ensure students won't have to miss class because of their periods. (Preston Mulligan/CBC)

Kelly Regan, the minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, said initiatives like this can help destigmatize periods.

"I think we need to be comfortable talking about a very natural bodily process. Menstruation is a fact of life for a big chunk of our population," she said.

She said this initiative follows a wave of others across the province looking to eliminate period poverty.

- **Halifax libraries to offer free tampons, pads in every bathroom**
- **2 Dartmouth pharmacies offering free period products to customers in need**
- **How some Nova Scotia students are pushing for menstrual equity**

Regan said Halifax recently began making free menstrual products available in its municipal buildings.

She also pointed to Feed Nova Scotia's "Dignity. Period." and United Way's "Tampon Tuesday" events as ways to help people who can't always afford menstrual products.

She added that Nova Scotia is in the analysis stage of a pilot project in Sheet Harbour aiming to combat period poverty as part of the province's poverty reduction strategy.