

# HYGIENE INFORMATION



On your NOLS course you will learn all of the skills you need to live and travel comfortably and responsibly in the backcountry. It may be the first time you will spend a prolonged time camping in a wilderness environment and you may feel some anxiety regarding hygiene, but it's actually pretty simple. All NOLS instructors are trained to handle hygiene issues in a sensitive and professional manner and will teach you ways to maintain your hygiene and privacy on the expedition. Below is some information to help you prepare for a healthy NOLS course.

## General Clothing Tips

- Bring comfortable, synthetic fabric underwear, which is easy to wash and quick to dry. If you are allergic to synthetic fabrics, you can bring merino wool underwear.
- Bring the recommended amount of underwear. We know it seems like too few but with washing, it truly will be sufficient for a backcountry course or semester.
- Sports bras are popular but some are very thick and don't dry readily. There are a variety of fabrics available from lightweight polyester that dries quickly to fleecy warm models for winter.
- In the summer, wear shorts or underwear that allow for adequate ventilation. Baggy running shorts work well. In the winter long underwear breathes well if you take off your wind protection clothes before going to bed.

## Bathroom Hygiene Tips

- You'll learn how to 'pee and poo' in the woods in a way that is environmentally responsible and sanitary. You'll learn about using a variety of alternatives to toilet paper such as natural "toilet paper" (leaves, moss, smooth stones and snowballs) or the "backcountry bidet" (water and your hands). It sounds crazy now, but many students come to prefer these alternatives to toilet paper or wet wipes, which you'll have to carry with you after you use it.
- Hand washing is an important aspect of maintaining backcountry hygiene and health. Your instructors will demonstrate how to effectively wash your hands. Bring a small (2 oz.) bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitizer for cleaning your hands.
- If you have a vagina you will be encouraged to wash your pubic area with mild soap and water daily and bring an extra bandana to clean yourself after urinating. You will learn how to keep your bandana clean when you arrive.

## Menstrual Hygiene Tips

- Even if you don't menstruate yet, or if you don't think your cycle will coincide with your course, bring menstrual hygiene supplies. It is possible your menstrual cycle may change while living in the outdoors.
- You could also consider using the Diva Cup, a reusable menstrual cup, in lieu of tampons or pads. If you are using a new method, practice before your course so you are not using it for the first time in the backcountry.
- Bring extra products in case your cycle changes or if pads or tampons become wet. If a few people each bring a bit extra, the group can cover most any emergency without adding a lot of bulk.
- Remember, just like used toilet paper and wet wipes, you will need to bag and carry your used tampons and pads; they can be sent out with the garbage when your course is re-supplied with food and fuel. A small stuff sack with a couple of extra plastic bags, a wide mouthed water bottle, or plastic container is typically used to carry used products. An aspirin tablet or two (not Tylenol) placed in the bag will help keep odors down.

## Changes in Your Cycle or Abnormal Symptoms

If you experience changes in your menstrual cycle or abnormal signs such as itching and/or soreness in the vaginal area, excessive and or smelly discharge, increased frequency or pain on urination don't hesitate to bring this to the attention of your instructors. Our first aid kits have medication to treat the more common genito-urinary infections, including urinary tract infections and yeast infections.