

Visitor to the Cupboard

At boarding school we had to queue on a Monday evening at The Cupboard to purchase our menstrual requirements. Before I was a visitor of The Cupboard I was amazed at how casually the girls would queue up, get their supplies, and wander off without any embarrassment, often tossing the packs of pads between them like basketballs.

The first few times I queued up for menstrual pads I was red-hot with shame, and brought a sports bag so I could quickly hide the pack away. But before long, infected by the openness and lightheartedness of more experienced girls, I was casually tossing packs around like everyone else.

The pads back then didn't stick to knickers. They were attached front and back to suspender-belt-type hooks hanging from the thin elastic belt that was strung low on your hips. It seemed impossible to get the tension right and the pad would either ride up in the front or up in the back, and I felt like I was forever trying to secretly adjust it.

After some time battling with pads and belts some friends and I decided we would give tampons a try. Between us we bought a small box and each took one and headed off to the boarding house toilet cubicles. We were all very giggly and comments like, "I can't get mine in" and "I don't think I've got a hole", "What angle do you push it?" and "Mine's stuck and it's only half-way in" were flying between the cubicles. It was hilarious. Anyway we persevered and eventually all succeeded.

As told to Jane Bennett by her sister Diana Holden

