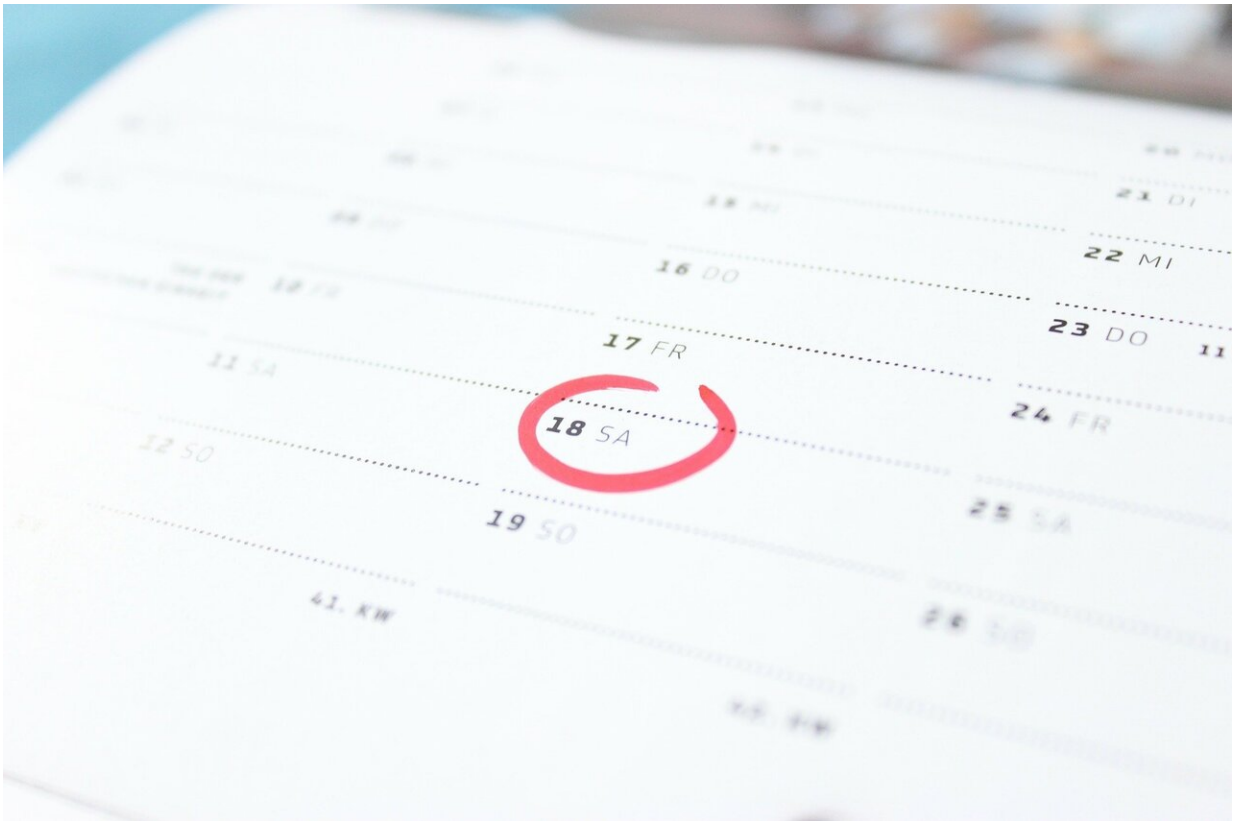


# Vienna drugstores offer free period products for women in need

October 11 2023

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Austria's capital Vienna on Wednesday rolled out a program to combat "period poverty" with drugstores offering free sanitary products to disadvantaged women.

In 2020, Scotland became the first country in the world to sign free universal access to period products in [public buildings](#) into law.

Starting from this week, 15,000 disadvantaged girls and women in Vienna can each get a free packet of sanitary pads or tampons at a drugstore chain for their monthly period needs.

"Access to period products is a basic need," said Vienna's Social Democrats deputy mayor Kathrin Gaal. "They should under no circumstances be a question of money."

Vouchers for the packets will be distributed in the city's approximately 80 youth centers and [food banks](#) "to target those really in need," Kristina Hametner, head of the Vienna office for women's health, told AFP.

The "Red Box" program follows a successful pilot scheme in the capital's underprivileged Brigittenau district in 2021.

Under the three-month scheme, 80,000 tampons and 95,000 sanitary pads were made available in Brigittenau, where about 20 percent of women are at risk of poverty.

Period poverty occurs when [women](#) and girls lack the money for tampons, pads or other sanitary products.

Studies suggest that a woman needs approximately 17,000 tampons or pads on average throughout her life, with costs amounting to about 3,000 euros.

Globally, campaigners say the issue has a direct effect on girls' education, with a knock-on impact on [work opportunities](#), thus deepening gender inequality.

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Citation: Vienna drugstores offer free period products for women in need (2023, October 11)  
retrieved 29 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-10-vienna-drugstores-free-period-products.html>

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