



## Personal Care/Hygiene Information

The strenuous activities and backcountry setting of an Outward Bound Course necessitate special considerations with regard to personal care. A change or increase in physical activity level, change in elevation from your home environment, and remote nature of the field require students to plan for changes that their bodies might experience. This document covers some commonly asked questions by students. If you have additional questions prior to course, please ask your Course Advisor!

### General Information

If you need guidance while on course, your instructors are available and well-versed in helping students learn personal care skills in the backcountry. Please do not hesitate to ask them any questions you may have on how to deal with a novel situation.

### Bathing

You can expect to get dirty on your course, but maintaining basic hygiene is an important part of backcountry travel. You will be able to do basic cleanup every day: for example - wash your hands (several times a day), brush your teeth, wash your face, and comb your hair. While there is no access to bathing facilities during course, our High Sierra courses often encounter lakes or streams where students can rinse off or swim. On Joshua Tree courses students are welcome to bring a travel pack of baby wipes to stay clean during their expedition. Regardless of course area, all students will be taught how to maintain hygiene in the backcountry.

On most courses, students will be offered a basic backcountry shower at the end of course. This is an opportunity to rinse off in the field using soap and water prior to traveling home. Students will be provided with an individual, sheltered area to clean apart from the group and can check with their instructors regarding any special considerations for this space.

### Deodorant/Antiperspirants

These are strongly discouraged on course for a variety of reasons.

- Antiperspirants work by clogging your pores and therefore do not allow your body to sweat, which is your body's natural method of preventing overheating. Students are active for long periods of time, often in warm weather, and their bodies need to be able to take care of them by perspiring.
- Deodorant, when worn without regular showers or scrubbing, can lead to rashes.
- Many deodorants have scents that are attractive to insects and other animals.



# OUTWARD BOUND CALIFORNIA

## Underwear

It's important to find fabrics that are moisture wicking and breathable. Synthetic, merino wool, and silk materials wick away moisture better than cotton. To help prevent skin irritation on course, find underwear that is close-fitting but not too tight. To reduce chafing, we recommend at least one pair of synthetic compression shorts for students with penises and testicles or for anyone whose legs rub together while walking. For everyone, airing out your hiking underwear at night is essential. Your instructors will teach you how to do backcountry laundry (without soap) in lakes and streams. If your course is 22 days or longer, you are welcome to pack 1-2 additional pairs of underwear.

## Menstrual Cycles

Students who menstruate may experience changes to their cycle while on course. Flow may be heavier or lighter than usual, and symptoms may be different than you encounter at home. To prepare for your course, please bring the following:

- Twice the number of tampons, pads, panty liners normally used during your cycle\*
- Or, a menstrual cup (e.g. "Diva Cup") if you typically use this method\*
- 3-4 large, freezer grade quality, zip-lock plastic bags
- Extra Bandana (to be used as a pee-rag when not menstruating)
- 1-2 extra pairs of underwear
- 1 travel pack of unscented wipes (optional)

*\*If you typically use tampons or a menstrual cup exclusively, please also bring panty liners.*

If you unexpectedly start your cycle while on course, some menstrual products will be available in our first aid kit.

At Outward Bound, we pack out all that we pack in. Each student will be provided with a bag in which to store used products until the group reaches its next re-supply. On courses over 14 days long, re-supplies happen roughly every 5-7 days, and used items can be disposed of then.



## Transgender / Gender Non-Conforming / Non-Binary

- Binding and tucking can be safely practiced on expedition, however the heat and level of exercise combined with lack of regular showers can make tucking and binding uncomfortable. So, you should have a backup plan in case this becomes too uncomfortable. Students should bring an extra binder or underwear made for tucking that you can switch to when you are sweaty or wet. We recommend students take these off at night, and everyone in the group will be given the option to request a solo shelter for privacy at the start of the course. You can find more tips and information about binding in the outdoors on the [Wild Diversity website here](#).
- Medications like injectable hormones or hormone blockers, patches, or topical compound gels/creams can be accommodated on course. However, you must be able to self administer (ex. Injections). We also request that you provide your own sharps container if using injectable medication (this can be something like a small Nalgene bottle). Please make sure to talk to your course advisor about what medications you are bringing!
- Any information you disclose to your course advisor during the admissions process will be shared with your instructor team only, no one else. Students on course are not given any personal information about the others on the course. It will be your decision about how much you share with others during the course.