



Put an end to secrets in tampons and pads!

Menstrual products such as tampons, pads, menstrual cups and period underwear come into direct contact with some of the most sensitive and absorbent tissues on a body. In fact, the Food and Drug Administration has received hundreds of reports of adverse reactions to pads and tampons that have required medical evaluation and care. But due to the regulatory classification of menstrual products as “medical devices”, there is currently no legal requirement for manufacturers to disclose the ingredients used in tampons and pads. As a result, a full list of ingredients used in these products is rarely disclosed publicly.

The fact is that the ingredients in tampons and pads can have very real adverse health effects. Manufacturers should legally be required to disclose the ingredients that make up their products.

What’s in those additives?

Chemical additives such as fragrances, lubricants, lotions, odor-absorbing compounds and even antibacterial compounds are often added to menstrual products by manufacturers. Chemicals that may make up these additives include ones that are linked to allergies, irritation, cancer, endocrine disruption and birth defects. Yet their presence is often kept secret from those who are purchasing these products.

Chemicals of concern found in tampons and pads include:

- Dioxins and Furans
 - Unknown fragrance chemicals
 - Unknown antibacterial chemicals
 - Pesticide residues
 - Volatile organic compounds
- such as:
- Styrene
 - Chloroform
 - Acetone

Are materials used linked to Toxic Shock Syndrome?

Past research on toxic shock syndrome has associated the absorbent material in tampons with an increased risk of the disease. While rates of toxic shock syndrome have decreased since the removal of certain brands of tampons (and the highly absorbent materials they were made of), there are still new cases of the disease every year. Both customers and health professionals have an interest in better understanding which absorbent materials still pose the greatest risks.

People have a right to know what is in the products they use on their bodies. Period.

We have come to expect disclosure of ingredients in foods and cosmetics because of the direct interaction of these products with our bodies. We should expect no less from menstrual products, which are designed to come into direct contact with sensitive and absorptive vaginal tissues. Through greater awareness of the ingredients in menstrual products, we can help prevent adverse reactions and improve product safety over the long term. In addition, disclosure gives people who menstruate the power to choose products with ingredients they feel good about putting on and in their body.

The Solution

Legislation (A.164) has been introduced in New York by Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF-Manhattan) that will require disclosure of ingredients in menstrual products, including tampons, pads, menstrual cups and period underwear. Go to www.womensvoices.org to voice your support for the bill.



1. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2017) MAUDE - Manufacturer and User Facility Device Experience Database. Available at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfmaude/search.cfm>