



DETOX THE BOX
STAYING ENGAGED

Harmful ingredients, toxic marketing, and the potential health impacts of menstrual & intimate care products on our health



WELCOME

Welcome to your #DetoxTheBox Staying Engaged Kit! In this kit, you will find information on period and intimate care products, conversation starters, video links, opportunities to take action, and ways to take your *engagement to the next level*.

While we know our bodies inside and out, we may not be aware of the ingredients in the products we use. That's because companies aren't required to *disclose all ingredients* in period and personal care products, even when those ingredients are linked to reproductive harm, infections, and cancer. To make matters worse, aggressive advertising tells us that we need to purchase products like wipes, washes, douches, and powders in order to feel confident and sexy. Companies are *turning a profit* from making people feel shame about their bodies!

We have a right to know what is in the products we use intimately, and our bodies are healthy and beautiful the way they are! Talking openly about menstrual and vaginal health can feel awkward. But this kit is designed to break down walls and spark dialogue between friends, to help *de-stigmatize* the issue so that we can focus on working to make period and intimate care products safe, healthy, available, and affordable.

No matter how we choose to take care of our bodies, the products we use should NEVER put our health at risk.

THANK YOU for your passion and commitment!

Women's Voices for the Earth

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Did you know?

Vaginal tissue is much *more absorptive* than other skin, making the presence of reproductive toxicants and other toxic chemicals in period products especially concerning.

"FEMININE CARE"

Many of WVE's earlier materials contain the word "feminine" when used to describe period and other personal care products like wipes, washes, douches, and sprays — this is a term that has traditionally dominated the menstrual products industry. But *we know that words matter*, and by using the term "feminine" we push people out of the conversation.

There are people who use these items who do not identify as women. The experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming people are valid and their needs are critical to our mission of *building healthier communities*. We hope you will notice that moving forward we will be more mindful in how we talk about who is impacted by these products and by our work.

Check out this blog

"For much too long the language to describe and talk about period products has been exclusively feminized and limited to cisgender women. This is a problem; it excludes people's experiences by inferring that the only people who have periods are women and girls, disregarding the fact trans men and non-binary people use these products too. This can be incredibly dangerous because it means not all the voices of people who menstruate are being included in important decisions and conversations about their health."

[READ MORE](#)

HERE'S THE DEAL

TOXIC INGREDIENTS

On average, a person who menstruates will be on their period for a cumulative 6.25 years in their lifetime. If a person uses pads or tampons, they may be exposed to toxic chemicals like dioxins, furans, and pesticide residues - which are linked to *cancer, reproductive harm, and hormone disruption* - for more than 400 periods, for more than 2500 days, for more than 6 years of their life, through some of the most sensitive and absorptive skin on their body. Couple that with “cleansing” products like wipes and douches, and that’s an even greater dose of harmful chemicals. For example, intimate wipes contain undisclosed fragrance chemicals, allergens, and a formaldehyde-releasing preservative.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

Regulation is lacking in the menstrual and personal care products industry, there are no federal laws that require companies to disclose all of their ingredients. Corporations could take the ethical step of using safe, tested, and fully disclosed ingredients, but most do not, hoping that people will not pay attention to the chemicals being used in these products. *But we are watching!*



HERE'S THE DEAL

BODY-SHAMING MESSAGING

Products like douches, sprays, and wipes are marketed primarily to women and girls as though they are a necessity to be sexy, confident, and normal. Advertisements *plant a seed of worry and shame*, suggesting that women should be paranoid about the way their vaginas smell. Products are packaged with bright colors and floral patterns to seem fun and innocent and attract young women and teens. But such marketing is based on cultural and historically biased attitudes *meant to shame* women about their bodies and odor, particularly women of color.

DISPROPORTIONATE BURDEN OF EXPOSURE TO WOMEN OF COLOR

Data shows that Black and Latinx women use douches, washes, and sprays at higher rates than white women. This is not surprising when you consider that centuries-old attitudes about Black women reflect both racist and misogynistic ideas about their bodies and “odor.” Companies making douches, powders, and wipes are all too eager to capitalize on—and thus perpetuate—these harmful ideas that lead to Black and Latinx women using “cleansing” products at higher rates than their white counterparts. Targeted advertising puts women of color at heightened risk of exposure to chemicals that are linked to cancer, hormone disruption, and fertility issues.

For more on these issues, see the [TIME](#) and [Bloomberg](#) articles.

THE B●TT●M LINE

People are tired of companies using toxic ingredients, failing to provide full ingredient transparency, and promoting sexist, racist, and *manipulative* marketing to sell their products.

Our bodies are great just as they are, and we deserve access to vital information about product safety to make the most informed decision.

The information and videos in this action kit are meant to raise awareness and provide opportunities for you and your community to first talk openly, and then use your collective power to *demand change*.

Did you know?

Many menstrual and personal care products contain fragrance. “Fragrance” can be made up of potentially hundreds of different ingredients, many of which are linked to health problems. What’s worse, most manufacturers choose to keep these *ingredients a secret*.

MENSTRUAL EQUITY

The most commonly recognized definition refers to the affordability, accessibility, and safety of menstrual products. But menstrual equity is not just defined by-products — it is also about education and reproductive care. It's about making sure that people have the *needs, support, and choices* to decide how they want to take care of their menstrual health. And it's about finally ending the stigma around periods that have prevented not only decision-makers but also healthcare providers, educators, and individuals from ensuring that menstrual health is a priority. But we know it's more than that. In fact, the definition is growing and changing, as voices from all over the world continue the conversation about period health, product access, affordability, education, and safety.

So let's keep talking. Let's keep acting. Let's keep leading...

Moving the Mainstream!

The culture of shame that surrounds periods and reproductive health is changing – thanks to so many dedicated activists, advocates, organizations, researchers, reporters, and forward-thinking businesses. And thanks to you. But there is still more work to be done! The more we can help get the conversation into the mainstream, the more we can move the mainstream!

CONVERSATION

STARTERS

Start a conversation with a friend or family member or yourself and if you feel comfortable, share it on social media tag us @womensvoices

What is a period?

What is Menstrual Equity?

What do you look for when buying intimate care products?

Have you heard?
"You smell bad when you are on your period."

Have you heard?
"If you use a tampon, it means you're not a 'virgin'"

Do you remember being told or taught to use "cleansing" products?

CONVERSATION

STARTERS

Start a conversation with a friend or family member or yourself and if you feel comfortable, share it on social media tag us @womensvoices

Have you seen ads on TV for intimate care products? What messages do you think are being conveyed?

Do you think that switching to safer alternatives will solve the issue?

What are some ways we can approach body care practices and rituals that do not put our health at risk?

What do you think it would take for people to be able to talk about this issue more openly?

Some companies have started disclosing some ingredients in their pads and tampons. Why do you think they agreed to this change?

Do you see alternative products where you shop? Do you think they are affordable?

FACTS TO SHARE



Chem Fatale

A closer look at the potential health effects toxic chemicals in period and intimate care products have on our bodies.

bit.ly/chem-fatale

Slippery Slope

Vaginal exposure to lubricants can have harmful side effects long after their use that pose a considerable risk to reproductive health.

bit.ly/lubricants-safety

The Rub With Wipes

Wipes may be doing you (and the planet) more harm than good. Many wipes contain chemicals of concern linked to cancer, hormone disruption, and fertility problems.

bit.ly/rub-with-wipes

Vulvovaginitis

If you are experiencing vulvar or vaginal inflammation — pain, itching, burning, irritation or infections — you are not alone

bit.ly/vulvar-health

FACTS T● SHARE

How are Menstrual and Intimate Care Products Regulated?

Menstrual products (tampons, pads, menstrual cups) are regulated by the FDA as medical devices and intimate care products (douches, wipes, washes, sprays, powders) are regulated by the FDA as cosmetics.

bit.ly/menstrual-regulation

Phthalates in Tampons and Pads

Phthalates are plasticizer chemicals linked to reproductive and developmental harm. They are commonly used in cosmetics, in plastic products, and are found in our food.

bit.ly/phthalates-tampon

Nanosilver in Period Products

The immediate proximity of underwear to vulvar tissue implies a significant possibility of migration of the antimicrobial agent to these highly sensitive tissues.

bit.ly/nanosilver-period

DIGITAL SHAREABLES



[How-To Use Period Care Products \(tampons, pads & menstrual cups\)](#)

bit.ly/period-howto



[Detox the Box - Spoof of Justin Timberlake's "Dick in a Box" on SNL](#)

bit.ly/detox-the-box

DIGITAL SHAREABLES



[Answers to Questions on Intimate Care Products and Period Health](#)

bit.ly/intimatecare-questions



[WVE's Vaginal Health Panel: Discussion Intimate Care Products](#)

bit.ly/Vaginal-Health-Week

DIGITAL SHAREABLES

DID YOU KNOW?

Vaginal tissue is much more **absorptive** than other skin, making the presence of hormone-disrupting and other toxic chemicals in period products especially concerning.



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HOW TO AVOID TOXIC CHEMICALS IN MENSTRUAL & INTIMATE CARE PRODUCTS.

Pads and Tampons

- Switch to unscented or fragrance-free
- Look for organic cotton
- Look for unbleached or chlorine-free

Wipes . Washes . Sprays . Douche .

- Reduce your use of these products
- Look for unscented or fragrance-free
- Read labels to avoid these chemicals

Methylchloroisothiazolinone	Benzethonium Chloride
Methylisothiazolinone	Benzocaine
Parabens	D&C Red No.33
Quaternium-15	Ext D&C Violent #2
DMDM hydrantoin	FD&C Yellow #5
Octoxynol-9	

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WHAT'S HIDING IN YOUR PERIOD PRODUCTS?

This is a limited list of the chemicals that have been **detected in period products** and the **health impacts of concern** associated with exposure. While a few studies have attempted to assess and measure potential risks of these products, all have indicated that there is **more work to be done** to better understand the impacts these products may have.

BENZENE

Cancer, anemia

GLYPHOSATE/AMPA

Cancer, reproductive toxicity

XYLENE

Neurotoxicity, reproductive toxicity

PARABENS

Endocrine disruption, asthma, reproductive toxicity

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MORE WAYS TO ENGAGE

Tell CEO's of Intimate Care Products to End
Toxic Products & Harmful Marketing!

Make your own pads

Write a Letter to the Editor

Attend an Our Stories, Our Flow Workshop

Share your period story!

Text **PERIOD to 52886** to stay updated on
legislation, events and intimate care news!

MORE TO LOVE

Here are a number of other fantastic individuals, organizations & movements that are working hard on menstrual equity issues, policy and culture shifts!

LOVE YOUR MENSES

BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

PERIOD EQUITY

@THEPERIODPRINCE

CODE RED COLLECTIVE