

The feminine care industry and alternatives

Reproduced with permission from The Epoch Times
(2006)

Whether we like them or not, natural laws are impossible to circumvent. So to avoid grinding to a halt one week per month, women regularly use disposable products. A woman will use, on average 11,000 tampons or sanitary pads in their lifetime.

Most of us think that this is inevitable. At what price, however, not only on our pockets but also on the environment and our health? What are the alternatives?

Reading the instructions for using a tampon gives you cold sweats. Since Procter & Gamble's Rely tampon affair in the 1980s, all manufacturers must inform users of the risks of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). It is a rare, but potentially fatal, disease. It was also said that the process of bleaching, formerly with chlorine, produced dioxin, a product classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a carcinogen, which could cause cancer of the cervix and endometriosis.

Health Canada and the Canadian Cancer Society state that tampons today contain only negligible amounts of dioxin, which "would not present a health risk. Any risk of adverse health effects would be regarded as negligible." Note the use of the conditional. The more exposed to it you are, the more serious the danger. WHO clearly specifies that toxic levels of dioxin have not been definitively established. What is certain is that pads irritate the skin. They contain products intended to absorb odors, even those without perfume. As for the tampons, they cause tiny cuts, which make our bodies more vulnerable to infections. What they absorb is 60 percent blood; the remainder is composed of secretions, which should remain in our vagina, to ensure its moisture and natural cleanliness. "The use of the tampons is associated with the increased risk of vaginal dryness and vaginal ulcers," explains Health Canada.

Lastly, no tampon or pad, however white they may be, is sterile. So, we are no more advanced than Egyptian women and their papyrus or our grandmothers and their rags.

All these reasons lumped together are largely sufficient to encourage women to take responsibility and seek other means of taking control of their purses, their health and reducing pollution.

For sanitary pad users, there are reusable and washable fabric towels. There are minis, midi and maxi pads, with wings. They are made from flannel and terry towelling and come in various pretty designs. You can also get the patterns and make them yourself.

Tampon users have the choice between natural sponges and the Mooncup or Keeper. The natural sponges are small sponges cultivated in seawater farms. Hard when they are dry, you just need to moisten them, attach a string and there you have a tampon, which is soft and effective, takes the shape of your body and does not dry out your mucous membranes. You can reuse them for up to six months, boiling them between periods.

The Mooncup and Keeper both look like bell-shaped cups and act like a small receptacle, which you place in the vagina like a tampon. The Keeper is made of latex and the Mooncup silicone. Held in by suction, they respect the natural balance of your body because they do not absorb, but collect blood. You just need to empty it and wipe it out or rinse it before reusing it and boil between periods. No rushing to the dairy in the middle of the night to get supplies! They also hold the same volume of blood a high-flow tampon does.

Sources: www.hc-sc.gc.ca (Canada Health), www.mum.org (Museum of Menstruation), www.cancer.ca (Canadian Cancer Society). Published in Birthplace magazine, March/April 2006, p 17.