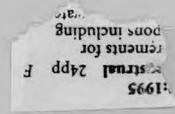


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TAMPONS—MENSTRUAL



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Australian Consumers' Association
Australian Federation of Consumer Organizations Inc
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Department of Health, Queensland
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TAMPONS—MENSTRUAL

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PREFACE

This standard was prepared by the Association's Committee on Tampons at the request of the Consumer Standards Advisory Committee of the Association following information supplied by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

The request for a standard for tampons followed the confirmation, in 1981, of several cases of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) in Australia which were associated with the use of tampons by menstruating women.

Although the incidence of TSS in Australia is low and investigations have shown that unopened tampons have not been contaminated by *Staphylococcus aureus*, the organism associated with TSS, the Committee believed the development of a standard was highly desirable so that this position did not deteriorate. In addition, the Committee agreed that there were other aspects which also related to the health and comfort of users that should be dealt with in such a standard.

The standard therefore concerns itself with these aspects by specifying materials, performance tests for absorptive capacity and the strength of the withdrawal cord, a microbial count to detect possible contamination during manufacture, instructions for hygienic use and information about TSS and its warning symptoms which is based on the current recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council.

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FOREWORD

The name Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) was first applied to a condition characterized by toxemia associated with *Staphylococcus aureus*. In 1980, cases resembling TSS were reported in the United States of America; almost all were in menstruating women and an association with tampon use was found. Although all major brands of tampons have been associated with TSS in the U.S.A., the statistically high association with one newly developed tampon which differed from others in construction and material led to its withdrawal from the market.

The exact connection between *S. aureus*, menstruation and tampons is not fully understood and is at present being closely investigated. TSS appears to be a toxemia caused by toxins produced by some strains of *S. aureus*.

Cases of TSS have been confirmed in non-menstruating women, in males and in children where it has been associated with local infections caused by *S. aureus*. There is no record of anyone contracting TSS from someone who already had the disease.

Extensive investigations in Australia and New Zealand have revealed no evidence of contamination of unopened tampons by *S. aureus*; but current evidence suggests that tampon use in association with staphylococcal infection is important in the disease.

Intensive investigation of new and retrospective cases was carried out by the US Center for Disease Control (CDC), Atlanta, Georgia. CDC studies indicate that the organism *S. aureus* was found in the vagina of 98 percent of women suffering from TSS who had cultures taken before receiving antibiotics. *S. aureus* is found in the vagina of about 10 percent of healthy women.

Although it is acknowledged that the vagina can be colonized with staphylococci, every precaution should be taken during the manufacture of the tampon and in the design of the package to ensure that contamination of the tampon does not occur.

It is also important that women using tampons be aware of the need for special care with personal hygiene during menstruation and with the way in which they handle the tampon, and also that they recognize the symptoms of TSS, should it occur.

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