

Menstruation Workshop Notes for Chemicals in Products

VWHC 06/07/2005

Dioxins in Tampons

- Tampons made from cotton and rayon
- Rayon comes from cellulose fibers derived from wood pulp
- Wood pulp is bleached – there is no reason to bleach wood pulp other than the perception that white=clean=better=pure
- Bleaching process used to use chlorine as part of the bleaching stages
- This was the source of dioxins as dioxins byproduct of the process
- Dioxin effects are cumulative and can be measured 20-30 years after exposure
- Concern is because tampons are used on some of the most absorbent body tissues
- Canada no longer allows use of chlorine to bleach pulp – not sure if the same in the US but pretty sure
- There may be small independent producers that use chlorine (in US) but all major companies which would supply the rayon don't use chlorine
- Instead mills used chlorine dioxide
- If the bleaching process is controlled correctly, there should not be any dioxins present
- Dioxins can be found in the air, water and ground from years of environmental pollution
- The risk of dioxin exposure from tampons is less than the risk of exposure from the environment
- It should be every woman's choice as to whether that risk is acceptable to them
- Could be risk from the cotton depending on where it is grown and the pesticides used
- Examples of organic tampons – Natura Care organic & Organic Essentials

Asbestos in Tampons

- Email rumour that manufacturers put asbestos in tampons to promote excessive bleeding and sell more products
- It is not an ingredient in tampons and there is no evidence that there is asbestos
- In my opinion (Janis), I think it would be hard to add asbestos to tampons because it is not commonly available and isn't commonly used commercially anymore

Toxic Shock Syndrome

- It is rare
- Caused by bacteria called staphylococcus aureus
- It is a form of blood poisoning resulting from toxins released by bacteria
- Exact connection to tampons isn't clear
- Risk increased by use of high absorbency tampons produced from rayon and leaving tampons in too long
- Vaginal dryness and ulcerations can occur when using a tampon more absorbent than necessary
- Micro tears in vagina allow transmission of toxin into blood stream

- The high absorbency tampon can also provide a breeding ground for the bacteria (which is why it isn't recommended to wear a tampon more than 6-8 hours)
- Highly absorbent viscose rayon used in tampons can contribute to dryness making area more vulnerable to cuts/tears providing a pathway for the bacteria
- Symptoms – often fast and severe
 - High sudden fever
 - Muscle aches
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Fainting
 - Drop in blood pressure
 - Sunburn like rash including peeling skin on hands and feet
 - Rapid pulse
 - Extreme fatigue and weakness
 - Sore throat
 - Dizziness
- Ways to avoid
 - Alternate tampons with pads
 - Don't use super absorbent tampons
 - Change tampons every 4-6 hours
 - Don't use tampons with plastic applicators
 - However the cardboard ones can also cause cuts as well so don't know how valid this is