

Dioxin Exposure Through Tampons

The Knowns and Unknowns About Your Risk

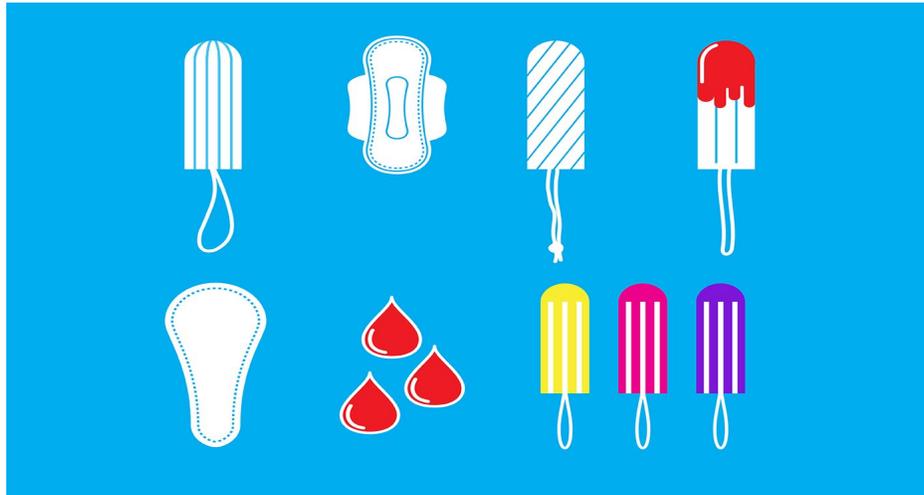


Image gathered from: <https://hellodoktor.com/healthy-living/know-use-tampon-right-way/>

A woman uses, on average, 11,000 tampons over a lifetime⁴. Yet many are unaware of the risks they face by using these medical devices. Tampons contain dioxins, a group of toxic chemicals which can, with repeated exposure to sensitive and absorbent vaginal membranes, accumulate in the body over time and cause a series of adverse health effects^{3,5,6}.

What Are Dioxins?

Dioxins are a group of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) which do not break down in the environment and have been shown to adversely affect neurological development, reproductive development, and immunologic function. They are bioaccumulative, meaning they are absorbed at a faster rate than they can be broken down, and extremely stable in the environment. The half-life of Dioxins in the body is estimated at about seven years^{1,3}.

What Effects Can Dioxins Have?

- Developmental and reproductive impairment³
 - Disruption of the endocrine system and interference with hormones³
 - Is associated with various types of cancer³
 - Endometriosis and infertility⁶
 - Development of skin lesions³
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How Did They Get In My Tampons?

The majority of dioxins present are human-generated through industry. Some sources include:

- Manufacturing of herbicides and pesticides
- Bleaching processes which use elemental chlorine
- Byproducts of combustion (Incineration of waste and burning of fuel)⁵

Many tampons are comprised of cotton, rayon, or a blend of pulp-based fibers which undergo a chlorinated bleaching process to prevent discoloring and deterioration. Despite a shift in industry use of elemental chlorine to a safer alternative, low levels of dioxins are still found in tampons^{1,3,5}.

What Can I Do to Reduce My Exposure?

While some regulation has been implemented in an attempt to reduce human and environmental exposure to Dioxins, Acts such as the “Menstrual Products Right to Know Act of 2017” are not being given enough consideration. Despite the stable and persistent nature of Dioxins and the adverse effects they are associated with, Dioxin exposure through feminine product use is severely understudied^{5,6}. There are, however, measures consumers can take to reduce individual exposure.

- Switch to using a menstrual cup or menstrual underwear⁶
- Buy organic, chlorine-free, and toxin-free feminine products (100% organic unbleached cotton)⁶

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3. Dioxins and their effects on human health. (n.d.). Retrieved December 04, 2017, from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs225/en/>

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5. U.S. EPA. EPA's Reanalysis of Key Issues Related to Dioxin Toxicity and Response to NAS Comments (External Review Draft). U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC, EPA/600/R-10/038A, 2010.

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6. **To view in depth reports, learn how to take action, and further reduce your exposure to dioxin through feminine care products, visit** “Women’s Voice for the Earth. Feminine Care Products. (n.d.). Retrieved November 28, 2017, from <https://www.womensvoices.org/feminine-care-products/>