Tampons and Menstrual Hygiene Products

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DESCRIPTION

- Menstruation is a major stage of puberty in girls, usually starting at any age between the ages of 8 and 13.

- Women usually lose 1-4 Tbs (<80 ml) blood during normal menstrual period.

- A wide variety of menstrual hygiene products are available. They are available in 2 major categories:
  - Reusable
  - Disposable

- Menstrual hygiene products include:
  - Menstrual pads
  - Tampons
  - Menstrual cup
  - Padded panties
  - Sea sponges
  - Menstrual maxis

- Menstrual pads are used as a protective cover outside the vagina, to absorb menstrual flow; available in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, and brands.

- Maxi pads are for heavy days and mini pads or panty liners for light days:
  - With wings:
    - Pros: Keeps pads in place
    - Cons: Can abrade inner thigh
  - Without wings:
    - Thong-shaped
    - Small, medium, large, hourglass shapes
    - Tube shape with straight sides

- Can be with:
  - Deodorant:
    - Pros: Smells good
    - Cons: Can cause local irritation
  - Nondeodorant:
    - Pros: Odor indicates vaginal infection and shouldn't be masked
    - Cons: No artificial smell

- FDA guidelines for decreasing the risk of contracting TSS:
  - Follow package directions for insertion
  - Choose the lowest absorbency for your flow
  - Change your tampon at least every 4-8 hours
  - Consider alternating pads with tampons
  - Don't use tampons between periods
  - Avoid tampon usage overnight when sleeping
  - Know the warning signs of TSS such as fever with chills, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness

- Menstrual cup is a barrier, either inverted bell shape or diaphragm-like device, to collect menstrual fluid

- Pros:
  - Economical
  - Can be worn for 12 hours
  - Environmentally friendly
  - Comes in different sizes

- Cons:
  - User must wash hands prior to use
  - Can be messy
  - Can leak
  - Needs proper cleaning and storage
  - Risk of TSS not well established, as product is not widely used

- Padded panties have washable absorbent pads, are economical, preferred alternative for allergies to synthetic materials used in disposable pads.

- Not frequently used in US

- Sea sponges are ancient practical alternative to absorb menstrual flow

- Pros:
  - Cost effective
  - Intravaginal absorbent
  - Environmentally friendly
  - Easy to use

- Cons:
  - User needs to wash hands prior to use
  - Need to boil prior to use
  - Can leak and be messy
  - Risk of TSS not well established, as product is not widely used
  - Needs proper cleaning and storage

- TSS:
  - Requires changing every 4-6 hours
  - Can cause irritation/discomfort/dryness
  - Learning curve for insertion and removal can cause clogging of sewer if flushed down the toilet
  - Incidence of UTIs reported in 1 study to be significantly higher among tampon users than among pad users

- Available with a choice of applicators:
  - Plastic
  - Cardboard
  - Assembly required
  - None

- Absorbencies as defined by FDA:
  - Light: ≤6 g of fluid
  - Regular: 6-9 g of fluid
  - Super: 9-12 g of fluid
  - Super Plus: 12-15 g of fluid
  - Ultra: 15-18 g of fluid

- Pros:
  - Light: ≤6 g of fluid
  - Regular: 6-9 g of fluid
  - Super: 9-12 g of fluid
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- Cons:
  - Light: ≤6 g of fluid
  - Regular: 6-9 g of fluid
  - Super: 9-12 g of fluid
  - Super Plus: 12-15 g of fluid
  - Ultra: 15-18 g of fluid

- Baseline absorbency:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml

- Baseline volume:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml

- Baseline weight:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml

- Baseline time:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml

- Baseline location:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml

- Baseline symptom:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml

- Baseline measure:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml

- Baseline summary:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml

- Baseline conclusion:
  - 1-4 Tbs
  - <80 ml
+ Minipad is a small pad designed to fit between the labia minora.
  - Pros:
    + Small size
    + Discreet
    + For light days or tampon backup
  - Cons:
    + Risk of TSS not well established, as product is not widely used
    + Company is exploring use for incontinence, and as a diagnostic testing mechanism for HPV
    + Costs:
      + Absorbs small amount of fluid
      + May be displaced during movement
      + Needs frequent changing
      + Costly
      + Not widely available

**Pediatric Considerations**

- Choice of menstrual hygiene products is a matter of personal preference, and many young adolescents choose to learn to use tampons even with the 1st menstrual period.
- For more information on TSS and or menstrual TSS see Septic Shock and Toxic Shock Syndrome.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


The Museum of Menstruation and Women's Health.
http://www.mum.org

March-April 2000.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

- FDA—U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- TSS—Toxic Shock Syndrome

**PATIENT TEACHING**

- Many girls are interested in using tampons from the onset of menarche.
- Mothers or other family may be concerned about tampons affecting virginity:
  - Reassurance
  - Assurances of normalcy

- Inability to use tampons:
  - Anxiety and vaginismus vs. hymenal abnormality
  - A guide to 1st tampon use at: http://www.youngwomenhealth.org
- Wikihow:
  + How to know when you're ready to start using a tampon at: http://www.wikihow.com/How-to-know-when-You’re-Ready-to-Start-Using-a-Tampon
  + How to use a tampon at: http://www.wikihow.com/Use-a-Tampon/

**PREVENTION**

- Imperforate hymen should be noted in delivery room or neonatal nursery.
- Hymenal variants and abnormalities should be detected by primary clinician in prepubertal years.