

Tampons

Have you heard that tampon makers include asbestos in tampons? Why would they do this? Because asbestos makes you bleed more. If you bleed more, you're going to need to use more.

Why isn't this against the law since asbestos is so dangerous? Because the powers that be, in all their wisdom, did not consider tampons as being ingested and putting asbestos in tampons therefore wasn't illegal or considered dangerous.

A woman getting her Ph.D. at the University of Colorado at Boulder sent the following:

"I am writing this because women are not being informed about the dangers of something most of us use—tampons. I am taking a class this month and I have been learning a lot about biology and women, including much about feminine hygiene.

"Recently we have learned that tampons are actually dangerous (for other reasons than toxic shock syndrome or TSS). I'll tell you this, after learning about this in our class, most of the females wound up feeling angry and upset with the tampon industry and I, for one, am going to do something about it. To start, I want to inform everyone I can, and E-mail is the fastest way that I know how.

"Here is the scoop: Tampons contain two things that are potentially harmful: rayon (for absorbency), and dioxin (a chemical used in bleaching the products). The tampon industry is convinced that we, as women, need bleached white products in order to view the product as pure and clean. The problem here is that the dioxin produced in this bleaching process can lead to very harmful problems for women.

"Dioxin is potentially carcinogenic (cancer-associated) and is toxic to the reproductive systems. It has also been linked to endometriosis and lower sperm counts for men. For both women and men, dioxin breaks down the immune system.

"Last September the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported that there really is no set 'acceptable' level of exposure to dioxin given that it is cumulative and slow to disintegrate. The real danger comes from repeated contact (Karen Houppert, "Pulling the Plug on the Tampon Industry"). I'd say using about four to five tampons a day, five days a month, for 38 menstruating years

is 'repeated contact,' wouldn't you?

"Rayon contributes to the danger of tampons and dioxin because it is a highly absorbent substance. Therefore, when fibers from the tampons are left behind in the vagina (as it usually occurs), it creates a breeding ground for dioxin. It also stays in a lot longer than it would with just cotton tampons. This is also the reason why TSS occurs.

"WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES? Using feminine hygiene products that aren't bleached and that are all cotton. Other feminine hygiene products (pads or napkins) contain dioxin as well, but they are not nearly as dangerous since they are not in direct contact with the vagina. Padded napkins need to stop being bleached, but obviously tampons are the most dangerous.

"So, what can you do if you can't give up using tampons? Use tampons that are made from 100 percent cotton, and that are UNBLEACHED. Unfortunately, there are very, very few companies that make these safe tampons. They are usually only found in health food stores.

"Countries all over the world (Sweden, Germany, British Columbia, etc.) have demanded a switch to this safer tampon, while the U.S. has decided to keep us in the dark about it. In 1989, activists in England mounted a campaign against chlorine bleaching. Six weeks and 50,000 letters later, the makers of sanitary products switched to oxygen bleaching (one of the green methods available). (Ms, May/June 1995).

"WHAT TO DO NOW: Tell people. Everyone. Inform them. We are being manipulated by this industry and the government. Let's do something about it! Please write to the companies: Tampax (Tambrands), Playtex, O.B., Kotex. Call the 800 numbers listed on the boxes. Let them know that we demand a safe product—ALL COTTON UNBLEACHED TAMPONS."

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