

FACT SHEET EXTERNAL FEMININE CARE PRODUCTS

The Products and Their Development

External feminine care products are worn outside the body, unlike tampons, which are worn internally. Externally worn feminine care products provide women with an extensive range of options for meeting their hygiene needs both during menstruation and at other times during the menstrual cycle.

Disposable menstrual pads were introduced in the 1920s, at which time the products were made from layers of cellulose wadding or cotton wool in a net tube, held in place with pins and a belt.

Pantyliners entered the market in the 1980s. They may be used on a daily basis to absorb bodily fluids, and menstrual flow at the beginning or end of a period when the flow is very light.

External feminine care products are also used following childbirth or after surgical procedures for absorbing purposes. They are sometimes used by women who experience light urinary incontinence; although they are not specifically designed for this purpose.

Societal and Individual Benefits:

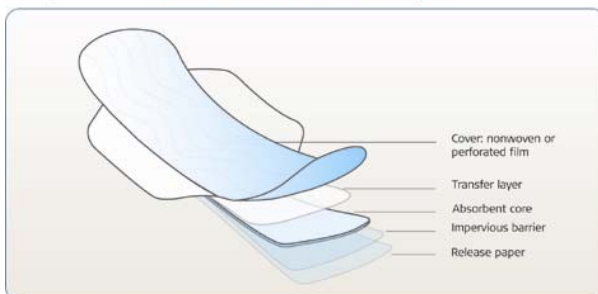
Modern feminine care products have played a significant role in the increasing independence of women, freeing them from restrictions previously experienced in participating in long haul travel, full time employment and sporting activities and in wearing fashionable clothing.

Products are comfortable, easy to use and provide highly efficient and discreet hygienic protection. These products have contributed to a reduction in lost time at work and study during menstruation, and offer increased freedom to maintain leisure and sporting activities at all times of the menstrual cycle

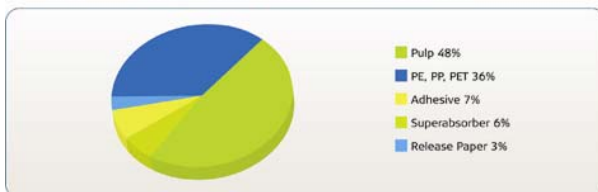
Individual packaging enables products to be easily and discreetly carried around and provides a ready method of hygienically disposing of used product by wrapping and disposing in a bin, thus discouraging flushing.

What Are They Made Of

Figure 3 Schematic View of an Ultrathin Sanitary Pad



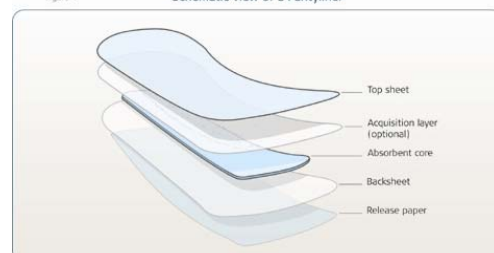
Graph 3 Average Ultrathin Sanitary Pad Composition 2006



Pads and pantyliners are made of materials based on natural raw materials such wood, crude oil and water. These raw materials are chosen for their ability to absorb and retain fluids, to avoid leakage and to provide comfort. The principal materials are:

- Wood pulp from sustainable forestry, none of which comes from virgin tropical rainforests
- Nonwoven fabrics made of polymers (polyethylene, polypropylene)
- Superabsorbent polymer, which can absorb many times its own weight in fluid;
- Adhesives made of natural and synthetic resins.

Figure 4 Schematic View of a Pantyliner



How They Are Made

There are three basic processes in the manufacture of external feminine hygiene products. They are:

- Fiberization of the fluff pulp, the addition of superabsorbent polymer (if it is used) and the formation of the absorbent pad
- Lamination with films, nonwoven substrates and elastic elements
- Shaping, cutting, folding and packaging.

While these 3 basic elements have remained the constant over the years, the way they are implemented has considerably changed with the introduction of major innovations and improvements to increase production efficiency and reduce manufacturing waste.

Industry complies with all relevant legal requirements and individual manufacturers conduct rigorous safety evaluation programmes which are an integral part of the product development process.

Did You Know?

- Before the development of disposable feminine care products women would use rags and scraps of fabric to absorb menstrual fluids. Ancient tribes would have used materials such as papyrus leaves, grasses and moss to absorb bodily fluids.
- A study in the US has calculated that the expected value of lost wages associated with heavy bleeding is \$1692 annually per woman complaining of increased menstrual loss.
- Inadequate access to menstruation protection materials has a negative impact on the participation of girls and women in education and training in the developing world.

The Industry

EDANA members who manufacture absorbent hygiene products and wet wipes employ some 100,000 people in Europe, thus making a substantial contribution to the economic wellbeing of many families and communities.

The industry invests widely in its European product development and manufacturing facilities with over 50 facilities spread across some 20 countries in the region. The industry also makes a contribution to projects in local communities and works collaboratively on environmental initiatives.

Safety Assurance

External feminine care products are safe for consumers, employees and the environment. The industry not only complies with the legal framework to ensure that products are safe; it also runs its own safety evaluation programmes and individual companies continuously monitor the market, their products in use and any concerns consumers may have in using them.

Sustainability through Innovation

Continuous innovation enables manufacturers to improve both the environmental impact and the performance of products. Products have become lighter and thinner, yet more absorbent. This means the use of less raw materials, packaging, energy and transport. Smaller and lighter products also produce less waste.

All three aspects of sustainability are embraced by manufacturers:

- Minimising environmental impact
- Providing societal benefits
- Contributing to a healthy economic environment



Product Disposal

Feminine hygiene products are safe and compatible with current waste disposal and treatment methods.

Waste from absorbent hygiene products, which includes external feminine care products, represents around 2 percent of municipal solid waste which in turn represents between 6 and 15 percent of all waste. So absorbent hygiene products comprise less than 0.5 percent of total solid waste in Europe.

Summary

Disposable external feminine hygiene products are an essential part of modern lifestyles, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Innovation and technology will enable the industry to continue to observe sustainability in the production of even higher performance products to meet the needs and increasing expectations of consumers.

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