

FACT SHEET INCONTINENCE PRODUCTS

The Products and Their Development

Single-use adult incontinence products absorb and lock away urine and faeces so that leakage does not occur and the user's skin is kept dry and healthy. They were first introduced to the European market in the late 1960s and initially were mostly used in nursing homes and hospitals. During the 1980s the market for incontinence products via retail outlets grew dramatically as awareness of the benefits of the products grew and stigma about their use declined.

The current product range is extensive and designed to meet the needs of people of all ages and both sexes. For people with light to medium incontinence there are pantyliners, pads and light pants. For people with medium and heavy incontinence there are pants, two piece products (pad and pant), all in one, and belted diapers. Additional protection can also be provided by products such as under-pads. Advice is available from health professionals and incontinence charities about the types of product to use.

Benefits to Users:

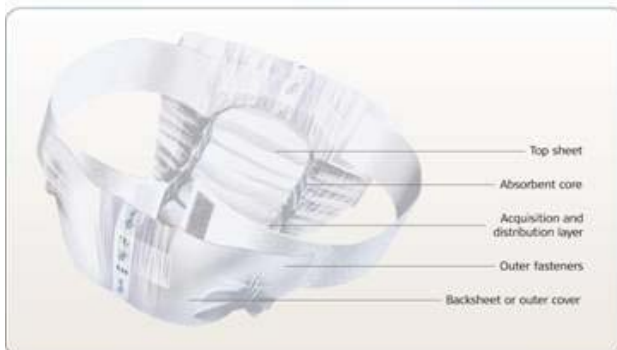
- allow users to maintain their sense of dignity and enable them to get out, work, take part in social activities, and lead a full and satisfying life
- provide hygiene, cleanliness, odour reduction and independence
- are healthy for the skin and help to prevent rashes, irritations and infections
- save sufferers or their carers the unpleasant task of managing heavily soiled clothes and bed linen.

Benefits to Society:

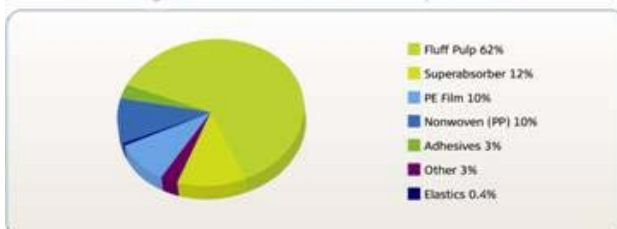
- help in infection control and minimizing the spread of infection between patients in care settings
- save valuable care assistant time in changing and disposing of products allowing more time for other important caring activities
- save costs in reducing the need for care of infections and bed sores caused by wetness and leakage
- saves costs and time in washing soiled clothes and bed linen.

What Are They Made Of

Figure 2 Schematic View of a Belted Incontinence Product



Graph 2 Average All-in-one Incontinence Product Composition 2006



Light Incontinence Products

The structure of these products is similar to feminine hygiene products like sanitary pads and pantyliners, but they are specifically designed for incontinence with sophisticated leakage protection for urine. These products are sandwich-structured with an absorbent core comprising a blend of fiberised fluff pulp and superabsorbent polymer. The topsheet is a layer of polyethylene (PE) or polypropylene (PP) nonwovens or can be a mix of both materials.

The back sheet is usually formed of a polyethylene (PE) film or alternatively of a nonwoven/film composite which may be breathable. It prevents wetness transfer to the clothes. The product is fastened to the underwear by an adhesive strip on the back sheet, protected by release paper prior to use. The product is designed to provide comfort, skin protection and odour.

Medium to Heavy Incontinence Products

The structure of these products is similar to a baby diaper with a topsheets, acquisition/distribution layer, and absorbent core, a back sheet, a cuff system and elastic leg gatherers (see diagram).

How They Are Made

There are three basic processes in the manufacture of incontinence products. They are:

- the fiberisation of the fluff pulp, addition of superabsorbent polymer and absorbent core formation
- lamination with films, nonwoven substrates, elastic elements and tapes; printing of wetness indicator and traceability markings
- shaping, cutting, folding and packaging. While these 3 basic processes have remained constant over the years, the way they are done has changed with the introduction of new technologies and more sophisticated designs. Major strides have been made in increasing production line efficiency and reducing manufacturing waste.

Did You Know?

- More than 25% of women will experience incontinence at some time in their life. One reason for female incontinence is the weakening of the pelvic floor muscles which occurs during pregnancy and childbirth.
- Some 55% of female residents in long term care facilities in Europe are incontinent.
- Around 4% of men experience daily urinary incontinence and the figures rise to 17% amongst older men. Male incontinence is often linked to prostate surgery.
- Modern incontinence products can make the difference between sufferers of incontinence being able to stay in their own homes or needing to move to residential care.
- Long term care is often accompanied by medium to heavy incontinence; modern patient care today is unthinkable without well performing incontinence products.
- Product innovation brings real benefits; for example incontinence pants that can be used like normal underwear. Patients suffering from the early stages of conditions such as dementia are able to go to the toilet again on their own, saving time, laundry and staff costs while restoring dignity for the patient.
- In 2006 the total estimated volume of incontinence products sold was around 7 billion pieces. The value of this market was around €1.7 billion.

The Industry

The members of EDANA 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

Disposable incontinence 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.

Specifically, adult incontinence products are classified as Class I medical devices by the European Medical Devices Directive 93/42/EEC. In order to comply with the requirements of this Directive there are specific standards in place (e.g. ISO 10993 series) which ensure that all used materials are safe in skin contact.

Sustainability through Innovation

Continuous innovation has produced important reductions in environmental impacts in product weight and packaging. At the same time, product performance has been improved, offering consumers more comfort and better absorbency.



Further improvement for all-in-one products has been partly restricted by the requirements of the reimbursement and classification systems in different countries. These systems tend to favour products with high amounts of absorbent material; thus making weight reduction and the provision of a thinner product difficult in those situations. EDANA is currently developing alternative test methods which aim to help to overcome this limitation on product improvement opportunities.

Product Disposal

Disposable incontinence products are safe and compatible with prevailing waste disposal and treatment methods.

Waste from absorbent hygiene products, which includes single use incontinence 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

All forms of incontinence can cause isolation, depression and physiological problems and can significantly impact on social and work related aspects of the sufferer's and family's life. Adult incontinence products have an enormous positive impact on the quality of life of individuals suffering from incontinence.

Industry is committed to provide single-use incontinence products that give a better performance, better skin care with reduced resource use and reduced environmental impact; all at an affordable price.

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