

Annex: Continued production of essential health and personal care products

EDANA represents the entire value chain that leads to those products that are essential in the fight against COVID-19.

Our members are active in the different sectors, amongst which:

- Medical and Healthcare
- Protective Clothing
- Disinfectant and Anti-Bacterial Wipes
- Absorbent Hygiene Products

Medical and Healthcare

Nonwovens are extensively used in the medical field and in other sectors as barrier against biological agents. They deliver critical safety properties, such as prevention against infections and diseases. With today's multi-drug resistant strains of bacteria and virus, nonwovens can help in the fight against cross-contamination and the spread of infection in a medical or surgical environment. Because they are used only once and incinerated after use, the need for handling is avoided and the spread of contaminants is minimised.

Uses include:

- single-use caps, gowns, face masks, scrub suits shoe covers, head covers
- drapes, wraps and packs
- sponges, dressings and wipes
- bed linen
- contamination control, examination and isolation gowns
- lab coats
- procedure packs
- sterilisation wraps (CSR wrap)
- incubator mattresses
- wound care
- fixation tapes
- shrouds

Protective Clothing

Nonwovens are also extensively used in the medical field and in protection against liquid, biological and chemical agents in many sectors. They are used in clean rooms, laboratories and in the electronics industry to protect materials, goods and components from human contamination.

They serve as protection against a variety of substances which could be harmful for human contact, such as asbestos, dioxin, body fluids, hazardous gases, disinfectants, dirt, fine dust and splashes.

Because they are used only once and incinerated after use, the need for handling is avoided and the spread of contaminants is minimised.

Uses include:

- disease and disaster management
- police and emergency response services
- medical applications
- chemical handling
- pharmaceutical industry
- laboratories
- food industry
- industrial cleaning and maintenance
- hazardous waste clean-up

Nonwoven protective clothing was widely deployed to deal with previous epidemic scares, including the 2003 SARS outbreak, the wave of Bird Flu that swept through south-east Asia in 2005 and during the Swine Flu panic of 2009, when the demand for face masks, in particular, exploded on a global scale.

During 2014 and 2015, major manufacturers of nonwoven protective clothing for healthcare workers worked around the clock to meet fresh demand in response to the Ebola threat before it was eventually brought under control using such recognised public health containment measures.

Like in the case of the Ebola virus, early identification of patients infected with the Corona virus is not always possible. Healthcare workers are therefore urged to apply standard precautions consistently with all patients – regardless of their diagnosis – at all times. These include basic hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, safe injection practices and the use of personal protective equipment

Disinfectant Wipes

The significance of disinfecting wipes and other nonwoven-based cleaning materials should also not be overlooked.

Absorbent Hygiene Products

Absorbent hygiene products (AHPs) have made an important contribution to the quality of life and skin health of millions of people. Users of absorbent hygiene products benefit from the leakage prevention, strength and protection provided by nonwovens.

Nonwovens are used in baby diapers, feminine hygiene, adult incontinence and personal care products. They are used in multiple elements of the products, such as top sheet or cover stock, leg cuff, acquisition/distribution layer, core wrap, back sheet, stretch ears, landing zone, dusting layer and fastening systems.

Baby diapers

Baby diapers are safely used every day by parents all over the world.

They keep babies' and toddlers' skin drier and, as a result, healthier. These benefits have been confirmed by independent medical experts in skin and infant health. Baby diapers help reduce the transmission of infectious diseases: as faecal containment is reduced, so is the risk of spread of bacteria.

Adult incontinence products

Incontinence can dramatically change an individual's ability to participate in everyday life. It is a condition that will be experienced by more than a quarter of all women at some stage of their life and by nearly a fifth of older men. Some 55 percent of female residents in long term care facilities in Europe are incontinent.

Incontinence can cause isolation, result in depression and psychological problems, prohibit social activity and even hinder active participation in the workforce.

There is a wide product range of adult incontinence products designed to meet the needs of people of all ages and gender. They protect skin health, as products that are highly absorbent and use breathable materials reduce skin wetness.

Additional benefits include saving valuable carer time in changing and disposing of products, making changing a less difficult process and limiting the need for care of infections and bed sores caused by wetness and leakage.

Feminine care

Menstrual pads and tampons are safely used by women all over the world and are a popular choice for women during menstruation.

For some 40 to 45 years of their lives, women and girls throughout the world need to manage both regular and intermittent bleeding and discharges as a natural consequence of being a woman. Menstruation continues to be a taboo; even in more liberal societies menstruation can still be an embarrassing subject. Many girls and women around the world would not be in a position to pursue their education and employment goals without disruption without these products.

The variety of products now available, both internal and external feminine protection products and their comfort and size have helped to facilitate the increasing independence of women and their ability to be active at all times of the month.

Conclusion

In light of the current pandemic, we therefore request that the Nonwovens and Related Industries' value chain be recognized as a critical sector, and that it be given the means to continue ensuring production at all its facilities for the benefit Public Health at large.