

# EFFECT OF MENSTRUAL PADS ON THE ENVIRONMENT



**HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT: WHAT HAPPENS  
TO DISCARDED MENSTRUAL PADS?**

They are carried to the outskirts of the city where they are manually segregated by waste-pickers and are eventually buried in a landfill.



But the story doesn't end there. The fact that there is no proper way of disposal causes problems most of us are not even aware of.

- ▶ Given that the material used to make sanitary pads is essentially plastic, the used pads are non-biodegradable, which means that they will stay in the landfill for about 800 years!
- ▶ There is an informal practice of burning used sanitary pads, but the fumes contain toxic gases like dioxins and furans. We already know what air pollution can cause, hence none of these methods are eco-friendly or sustainable.
- ▶ Moreover, the waste-pickers are the ones who segregate the biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste. They don't use face-masks or gloves for this, meaning they are vulnerable to various microorganisms that thrive in the soiled pads.

- ▶ Incineration is a better technique to dispose of menstrual waste but burning of pads releases harmful gases that effects human health as well as the environment.



# BUT WHAT ARE THEY MADE UP OF?

## Toxic Chemicals in Pads, Tampons and Menstrual Sponges

- ▶ It turns out that most pads and tampons aren't actually made with cotton. Most are made of synthetic material like rayon or SAPs (Super Absorbent Polymers). These materials are often bleached with chlorine to give them that pristine white look you come to associate with the products.
- ▶ Menstrual sponges can also cause Toxic Shock Syndrome after repeated usage.

▶ **DIOXINS AND FURANS:**

These are linked to cancer, endocrine disruption and reproductive toxicity. These are byproducts of the bleaching process.

▶ **PESTICIDE RESIDUES:**

These residues are also linked to cancer.

▶ **Undisclosed fragrance ingredients, which may contain chemicals linked to cancer, endocrine disruption and allergies.**

IN A COUNTRY LIKE OURS, TO HAVE SOMETHING CALLED A 'SANITARY' PAD IS ALSO A VERY PRIVILEGED IN ITSELF. YET, WE PAY MUCH MORE FOR IT BECAUSE WE ARE UNABLE TO DISPOSE OF IT IN AN ECO-FRIENDLY WAY...

# SOME ALTERNATIVES THAT WE HAVE:



- ▶ **Menstrual Cup:**  
It is said that one cup can be used for about 10 years, making them both economical and eco-friendly.
- ▶ **Cloth Pads:**  
They are comfortable, environmentally friendly and are lighter to carry.
- ▶ **Menstrual Disc:**  
Similar to the Menstrual Cup, the disc too is inserted into the vagina to collect period blood but differs in shape and placement. It offers up to 12 hours of protection and holds five tampons' worth of fluid.

HOWEVER, IF SOMETHING DOESN'T WORK WELL WITH YOUR BODY OR CAUSES YOU ANY SORT OF DISCOMFORT, PLEASE RECONSIDER YOUR CHOICE. TAKE YOUR TIME TO ADJUST TO THE NEW ALTERNATIVES - IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO TRY IT OUT WITH THE SUPERVISION OF AN UNDERSTANDING ADULT.



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WHAT DO YOU THINK? IS IT A GOOD IDEA TO REPLACE MENSTRUAL PADS WITH ANY OF THESE ALTERNATIVES?

IF NOT, THEN HOW DO WE TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF PLASTIC PADS AND THEIR SUSTAINABLE DISPOSAL IN THE FUTURE?