

Speaker notes for:

Part 1 - ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE SANITARY OPTIONS

SLIDE 1 – LET'S START WITH THE PROBLEM

Rural and urban people need to deal with their soiled sanitary pads and tampons every month. Most conventional sanitary items are disposable, and government authorities struggle to find a way to handle the staggering amount of sanitary waste generated every month.

So "The Problem" begins with the potential side effects of conventional disposable sanitary hygiene products...which are the ones most supermarkets and stores sell.

Conventional Sanitary pads- being plastic, create a favourable environment for the growth of bacterial and fungal infections.

Conventional Tampons-if left inside longer than recommended can begin to adhere to the linings of the vaginal wall. On removal and re-insertion of a subsequent tampon, micro-scratches may occur which can lead to infections such as Toxic Shock Syndrome.

As a result of these factors women are recommended to change pads every 4-8 hours, or tampons every 3 hours,

This creates an Environmental "Problem":

- About 22 disposable sanitary items used per period
- The average person will use over 11 000 disposable pads and tampons in their lifetime

If you use disposable pads and tampons you'll be throwing away on average 1 shopping bag of plastics, fibres and wrappers each cycle. So at an average of 13 cycles per year –that's 13 shopping bags of rubbish per menstruating person per year.

SLIDE – PAD

The maths continues and can become quite overwhelming...but in summary- if each person menstruates for about 30-40 years, and there are over six million Australian & NZ menstruators every month-the result is an astronomic amount of landfill and waterway pollution... and money wasted!

Unfortunately, up to 90% of a conventional sanitary napkin is plastic (backings, adhesive strips, Dri-weave top sheet), with the core being wood pulp treated with absorbent chemicals to boost the wood pulps 'drying' effect.

SLIDE – TAMPONS

Conventional Tampons revolutionised period care in the 1960's but they aren't as great as we once thought:

- Removes 35% of healthy vaginal secretions, leaving you dry and more prone to thrush and irritation. They must only be used during a period.

Major brands of conventional tampons are made from cotton which can be exposed to synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides & defoliants. These tampons contain dioxins due to the bleaching process.

Dioxins & furans are toxic or poisonous substances- which have been linked to cancer, endometriosis, immune system suppression, pelvic inflammatory disease, reduced fertility and changes in hormone levels.

Vaginal dryness and ulcerations can occur when a tampon that is too absorbent for their menstrual flow is used. This can leave little scratches on the vaginal walls that may allow bacteria to enter the blood stream, possibly leading to toxic shock syndrome (TSS).

SLIDE- RUBBISH IN OCEAN

Because sanitary waste contains blood, it should be disposed of as 'biological waste'. This means it has to be specially treated or incinerated before being sent to landfill. While some people wrap pads and tampons in plastic or paper and throw them away along with domestic garbage or in sanitary bins, a vast number still flush them down the toilet. Approximately 192 million pads and tampons end up in our waste water each year and have to be removed and treated. The treatment costs millions of litres of clean water each year.

SLIDE – BLOCKED PIPES

In the last decade about 80% of young people aged between 11-24 years who live with their parents would flush their pads and tampons down the toilet, because alternative disposal can be smelly, messy and embarrassing.

Up to 75% of blocked drains are caused by disposable sanitary items... and this doesn't take into account what flushed items are doing to our natural waterways and sea life. NEVER flush tampons, pads, wet wipes or wrappers down a toilet!

SLIDE – LANDFILL

If sanitary waste does make it to landfill, its future really isn't much better. Conventional Pads take over 300years to break down in landfill, and conventional ttampons take from 6months to 5years to break down.

SLIDE – PADS AND TAMPONS CAN MAKE BEAUTIFUL THINGS

Sure, pads and tampons can make beautiful things....

But these current sanitation methods are outdated, primitive, and physically restrictive for people to reach their full potential, and to participate comfortably in all of life's activities. These forms of conventional hygiene have not really evolved since our grandmothers' day...

SLIDE – LETS LOOK AT THE SOLUTION

Let's look at some safe & sanitary alternatives to conventional pads & tampons that a lot of people worldwide have embraced.

There are three main options for environmentally friendly periods –

- Biodegradable pads and tampons
- Cloth pads
- Menstrual cups

SLIDE – BIODEGRADABLE SINGLE- USE

These are a good option if you really can't stand the thought of using re-usable items, or want to use it as a 'stepping stone' for a greener alternative. There are a number of brands on the market, and more options being made available each year.

The biodegradable pads are made of cotton, most commonly certified organic and Fair Trade. Any waterproof layers, such as the backing, are made of plant polymers. This makes the whole pad compostable and biodegradable.

The biodegradable tampons are made of organic cotton from sustainable plantations and are chemical-free. Their packaging is also completely compostable.

Biodegradable pads and tampons break down in ideal conditions in about 3 months, which is a WHOLE lot better than 300 years!! So next time you're at the supermarket or health shop take time to check the box of your regular brand, and consider switching to sustainable brands if you choose to use disposable sanitary products.

REUSABLE PERIOD PANTS

Period pants are underwear that are leak-proof, odour absorbing, moisture wicking and reusable. They are made from stain-resistant anti-microbial fabrics such as bamboo, sports merino and microfiber. Period pants offer protection against sweat, light bladder leaks, menstrual onset, menstrual overflow/spotting, discharge and odour, and come in a variety of absorbencies -from light up to heavy-so can hold between ½ a tampon to 2 tampons worth of menstrual fluid, depending on the absorbency level of pants that you choose. They come in a few styles and colours. Period panties should last just as long as any other pair of underwear (around 2yrs).

SLIDE – CLOTH PADS

Cloth pads come in a variety of shapes, colours, sizes and absorbency, but all have the following features:

- A waterproof backing made from PUL (polyurethane laminate)
- An absorbent material in the core such as hemp fabric, bamboo velour or cotton fleece,
- A soft cotton top fabric

SLIDE – CLOTH PADS PICTURES

You will need around 6-12 cloth pads to cover you during your cycle. Simply rinse in cold water then soak in a container with cold water – an ice cream container with a lid works well. When ready to wash (do this within 48hrs of soaking otherwise the water in the container will get smelly), simply drain and rinse off the pads and put into the washing machine. You can wash them with your usual laundry.

One cloth pad should last at least 5 years with proper care. They are fine to use for your whole cycle.

Not sure if cloth pads are for you? Why not start with three in your drawer? Try them at home and then use disposables when out, or use cotton tampons and a mix of cloth pads. You will still be reducing waste, saving money and it is a great introduction to re-usable products.

SLIDE – MENSTRUAL CUPS

These are the most cost effective and environmentally friendly option of them all. They come in a variety of colours and sizes to suit flow.

SLIDE – INFO

Menstrual cups are made from 100% medical silicone, which means that they are hypo allergic or "low allergy".

Cups are worn internally like a tampon-but can hold around 2 to 4 times as much fluid as a tampon. A cup only needs to be emptied when it's full or every 12 hours-so you can actually wear it to bed and sleep the whole night through!

A cup can be used by all women, including teenagers and virgins.

Cups are easy to clean and use-and best of all one cup can last up to 10 years!

SLIDE – SAVINGS

So let's do the maths.....this maths is much more cheerful than the maths that we did earlier-this maths works out how much money you can save by using reusable sanitary items!!

Let's say that your disposable sanitary hygiene products will cost you around \$15 per cycle (this is for a light flow).

$\$15 \times 13$ cycles per year = \$195 spent on disposables/year

Cloth pads will cost from \$200-300. One menstrual Cup costs around \$59 and lasts for around 10 years. 10 years of disposables will cost nearly \$2000!!!

What a saving!!!!!!

SLIDE-THE CHOICE IS YOURS...

Hopefully now you will have enough information to make informed decisions about your menstrual hygiene options. Choose thoughtfully...there is a lot to consider...