

Tampon use and TSS

The link between TSS and tampon use is unclear. Research suggests that for cases which occur in women using tampons, tampon absorbency is a factor. For this reason it is important that you:

- always use a tampon with the lowest absorbency suitable for your period flow
- use a sanitary towel or panty liner from time to time during your period

Information about TSS is contained in the tampon manufacturers' instruction leaflet. This information is often updated, so remember to read the leaflet regularly.

When using tampons, it is also important to remember to:

- wash your hands before and after inserting a tampon
- change tampons regularly, as often as directed on the pack
- never insert more than one tampon at a time
- when using at night, insert a fresh tampon before going to bed and remove it on waking
- remove a tampon at the end of a period

This leaflet is intended to provide information on Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Information contained in this leaflet has been compiled, and reviewed, by a panel of medical experts and every effort is made to ensure it's accuracy at the time of publication.

Regrettably, our medical panel cannot advise on undiagnosed illnesses or personal cases. If you have questions regarding toxic shock syndrome relating to individual circumstances, we would encourage you to consult with an appropriate health professional.

TSSIS literature is available for downloading from the website at www.tssis.com

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Know the facts

fact Toxic shock syndrome is a rare illness. From a UK population of around 59 million there are about 40 cases reported each year.

fact Men, women and children can get toxic shock syndrome, for example following burns, boils, insect bites or infections after surgery. A proportion of the reported cases are linked to women who use tampons.

fact With early diagnosis toxic shock syndrome can be successfully treated. Sadly, however, out of the small number of people who fall ill each year, 2-3 people die from TSS. It is important to remember that if TSS is diagnosed and treated early there is a good chance of recovery.

fact Most doctors will never see a case of toxic shock syndrome. TSS is so rare that most doctors will not come across TSS during their medical careers.

For more information

For more information, contact the Toxic Shock Syndrome Information Service (TSSIS). A TSSIS pre-recorded 24 hour advice line gives more information about the illness. It is cheaper to call after 6pm or weekends.

Tel: 020 7617 8040.

Alternatively visit the TSSIS website:

www.tssis.com

For written advice write to:

**Toxic Shock Syndrome Information Service (TSSIS)
PO Box 450, Godalming
Surrey GU7 1GR**

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Toxic Shock Syndrome

Know the facts



Toxic Shock Syndrome
information service

www.tssis.com

You may have heard about the illness toxic shock syndrome (TSS) from magazines or from friends, but do you know why it is important to be aware of this illness? Would you recognise the symptoms? TSS is an extremely rare but potentially serious illness that can affect anyone. This leaflet gives you the essential facts about TSS, helping you to understand what TSS is and how it is caused. Read the information carefully, and keep this leaflet to refer to in the future.

What is TSS?

Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) is a type of blood poisoning that will make you feel severely ill very quickly.

TSS is a rare but potentially serious illness that can develop quickly in anyone – men, women and children.

What causes TSS?

TSS is caused by the common bacteria – *Staphylococcus aureus* – which normally live harmlessly on the skin and in the nose, armpit, groin or vagina of one in every three people. In rare cases certain strains of these bacteria can produce toxins (poisons) that cause TSS.



How rare is TSS?

TSS is extremely rare and most doctors will never even see a case. There are probably around 40 cases of TSS per year in the UK. In extreme cases it may prove fatal and sadly out of the small number of people who fall ill each year, 2-3 die from TSS.

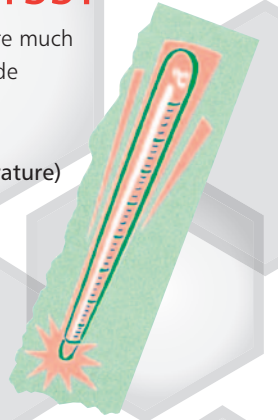
Who can get TSS?

Anyone can get TSS – men, women and children. A proportion of the reported cases of TSS are associated with women using tampons; the remainder result from localised infections, for example following burns, boils, insect bites or surgery. Some TSS cases are associated with burns or scalds that damage the skin defences allowing bacteria to grow and synthesise toxins. As menstrually related cases of TSS are now less frequent, these presentations have become more common. The risk of TSS is greater in younger people. This is because older people are more likely to have the necessary antibodies to protect them from the toxin that causes TSS.

What are the symptoms of TSS?

Some of the symptoms of TSS are much like severe 'flu' and usually include some or all of the following:

- a sudden high fever (temperature)
- vomiting
- a sunburn-like rash
- diarrhoea
- fainting or feeling faint
- muscle aches
- dizziness
- confusion



What should I do if I have these symptoms?

Consult your doctor at once, if you or anyone you know, has some of these symptoms and suspect TSS. If you are wearing a tampon remove it and tell your doctor that you have been using tampons. Likewise if you have suffered a burn or scalding be sure to inform your doctor. Don't worry about being alarmist – it is important to rule out the possibility of having TSS and if necessary your doctor will then be able to begin treatment early.



Can TSS be treated?

With early diagnosis TSS can be successfully treated with antibiotics to kill the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria, and other medicines which help counteract the symptoms.