

Best Practices For Menstrual Care in Public Restrooms

Background Information

A study conducted by Harris Interactive found that 79%, of the 1,072 women surveyed, said they have improvised by “MacGyvering” a tampon or pad out of toilet paper, or something else.

This is just one reason why menstrual care solutions should be as available in away from home bathrooms as soap, toilet paper, and paper towels. When designing restrooms and specifying their equipment, few consider the stigma of being left unprepared while away from home should your period need product on an emergency basis.

Beyond the obvious health benefits of providing period products, there are other gains for patrons as well as employees and maintenance staff. Providing reliable, attractive, and easy-to-use dispensers stocked with tampons and pads – and a clean and easy means of disposal – patrons and employees feel that their needs and well-being are considered.

When considering how to manage menstrual care most effectively, facilities should consider the entire experience for a user, beginning with the menstruator in need of menstrual care items, those who need to remove a menstrual item, the process of its disposal, as well as how the custodial staff is handling the discarded waste.

ISSA, the worldwide cleaning industry association created this document to educate those who own, manage, or work in away from home facilities about how to create a clean, healthy, and positive bathroom experience for your workers and customers. It will also explain how providing increased access to period products, dispensers, and disposal solutions in your away from home venue is good business as well as the right thing to do.

Best Practices Should Include:

Provision of free period products

- Free Vend Tampons and Pads provided in restrooms and regularly refilled.
- Dispensers are located inside the restroom, and when possible, installed in each stall.
- There is clear signage to inform menstruators that the period products are free and to take what they need

Provision of free menstrual waste disposal bags

- Single-use bags; for disposal of menstrual items should be provided in each stall.
- There is clear signage to show menstruators what the bags are for and how to use them.

Provision of safe and hygienic menstrual waste receptacles

- Receptacles are provided inside each stall.
- Proper fitting liners should be provided for every menstrual receptacle.
- There is clear signage inside every stall to remind menstruators to throw away period products in the receptacle and not to flush down the toilet.

Safe and proper menstrual waste disposal management

- Facilities must have regular and timely maintenance of menstrual waste receptacles. Maintenance means emptying, cleaning, and disinfection inside and outside of the receptacle.
- Facilities must provide their cleaning staff, who are tasked with maintenance of menstrual waste receptacles, with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and necessary training on OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (29 CFR 1910.1030).
- Alternatively, facilities can outsource the maintenance of menstrual waste receptacles and the timely and efficient disposal of menstrual waste offsite to a certified third-party provider.

Benefits of implementing Best Practices

For an Employer

Providing menstrual care products helps create an inclusive workplace that feels more welcoming and committed to employee wellbeing. Facilities that provide menstrual care products for their employees not only get improved productivity; they are in a better place to attract, and retain, top talent.

For the Facility

Providing menstrual care products helps the facility feel more welcoming and committed to its customers and users' wellbeing. Providing single-use disposal bags notably reduces flushing behavior, and in turn reduces plumbing problems, reduces cleaning times, and inevitably saving the facility costs. Overall, the facility will have cleaner restrooms by reducing odor and touch point contamination.

For Custodial Staff

Having each menstrual item contained in its own bag by the user, prior to being placed in a receptacle, lined with a form fitting liner that completely covers the inside of the receptacle, reduces occupational exposure risk for custodial staff, reduces cleaning times, and increases job satisfaction.

For the User

Having access to menstrual care products in "away from home" restrooms make for a positive facility experience. Having sanitary disposal solutions provided reduces exposure risks and keeps users safe while improving the user experience in the restroom by reducing odor and visible bloody waste.

For Government

Requiring free menstrual care products in government buildings such as schools helps to combat period poverty. It also helps reduce absenteeism among menstruators. Proper disposal of menstrual items could

save the government money by reducing the problems they experience with plumbing and their equipment at wastewater treatment facilities.

Conclusion

Beyond the obvious health benefits, there are other gains for patrons as well as employees and maintenance staff.

When facilities provide reliable, attractive, and easy-to-use dispensers stocked with tampons and pads — and a clean and easy means of disposal — patrons and employees feel that their needs and well-being are considered.

Readily available access to menstrual care products combined with safe and sanitary disposal also helps maintain clean and healthy restroom standards. These are appreciated by restroom users, but also by staff who attend to them.