



### D35 Tampon Pain and Injury From the Perspective of the Adolescent and Adult User

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the potential for pain and injury caused by a tampon inserted by the female user during menses. Furthermore, tampon pain and injury are compared in those using tampons 100% of their menses from those using tampons along with pads.

This presentation will impact the forensic science by providing results of a survey of 125 female subjects using tampons. It is significant to the forensic community because tampons are implicated as a rival hypothesis for injury to the female genitalia in sexual assault trials. Results of this study provide further scientific evidence in which to understand the question of tampon injury both in those using tampons 100% of the time and comparing those 100% tampon users to those using tampons part of the time in addition to using pads.

The presence and character of potential tampon injury to the genitalia has been a nagging question beginning in the 1930s when tampon use became more common. Some have said tampons do not result in hymenal clefts even in virgins.<sup>1</sup> Others have demonstrated that hymenal clefts occur in even the sexually inactive and the possibility of those clefts being tampon induced cannot be excluded.<sup>2</sup> Tampons without applicators were considered in the etiology of vaginal lesions by others.<sup>3</sup> Recently, it has been purported, without research support, that "injury to the posterior fourchette during tampon insertion is not uncommon;"<sup>4</sup> however, genital injury from tampons is not clearly or consistently evident in the research literature.<sup>1,5,6</sup> Also, the literature present is primarily from the perspective of the provider. Tampon-induced pain or injury from the perspective of the adolescent and adult tampon user contributes clarity to this growing literature on potential tampon-induced injury.

In this study, 125 sexually active adolescent and adult females were chosen by snowball convenience selection in the United States during 2011–2012. The survey was developed by experienced sexual assault examiners. The format of the paper-and-pencil questions required simply a yes or no and explanation as participants answered questions about their tampon or pad use. Postmenopausal women also answered from recall about the years of their tampon use. The results were tabulated into spreadsheet and will be further analyzed with descriptive results and inferential testing of the difference between the two groups – those using tampons 100% of the time and those using tampons and pads. Those using pads only served as a control group.

Three groups were surveyed: those using pads only, those using pads and tampons and those who used tampons only. Results will reveal the tampon type—straight or umbrella, plastic or board applicator and usage in the two groups using tampons. Also demonstrated will be the presence of pain or injury on tampon insertion, tampon wearing, and tampon removal, or if the tampon user was ever told by the provider during an exam that she had an injury to her genitalia. If pain was present, the user described the cause of the pain and the treatment she found which gave relief.

In conclusion, this study provides evidence from the perspective of the tampon user regarding pain, potential injury, and how it was resolved. Furthermore, results reveal whether those using tampons 100% of the time are any different in their pain and injury from those using tampons part of the time, in addition to pads. Data from this study contributes to the growing research evidence regarding tampons and genital injury.

#### References:

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#### Tampon, Genital Injury, Postmenarchal