

Project Shocking

I am the mother of a 20 year old girl that died in June from Toxic Shock Syndrome. My daughter was using a Playtex tampon. I've been doing an inordinate amount of research since her death in June, and have been sending out information daily via a pamphlet I authored with help from a PhD. known nationally for his research of Toxic Shock Syndrome. I also have been utilizing social networking and visiting high schools to point out the symptoms and prevention of tampon induced TSS. Many of these young women do not yet have the antibodies they need to use tampons containing viscose rayon.

Ladies have been contacting me daily to tell their personal experiences of TSS or share the story of their child who died of TSS. It's unfathomable how the numbers are rising. The sad part is, every single instance of TSS I have personally heard about was using Playtex. I'm sure it isn't only Playtex brand, but these are the instances I've heard about.

My daughter was only using "regular" absorbency. Regular absorbency isn't absorbency that is focused on. Amy was a hygiene freak, and changed her tampon like clockwork in fear she would get TSS. It still killed her. Another friend of mine almost lost her 15 year old daughter; not because she was using a tampon, but because of a fiber left inside her a week later. Her daughter is now recovering from reconstruction of her toes due to TSS.

TSS is killing young women everywhere. I believe it's every bit as bad as in the 1980's; however, no one knows it. Even Playtex says on their warning label that 1 to 17 of every 100,000 menstruating women PER YEAR will get TSS. If you figure that out, how many menstruating women are there; maybe 15% of the population? That takes the number up to 1 to 17 in 15,000 PER YEAR. Pardon my math skills; I'm aging fast! It's staggering if you get to the real numbers! Up to 25% of these young women will die. People aren't reporting to the FDA; the FDA isn't policing the factories responsibly. They are under the grandfather clause with the FDA, so their new products aren't going through appropriate testing. They don't have to report what is in them. TSS isn't reportable to the CDC; yet the CDC gives out numbers of cases. This isn't right. People are led to believe these CDC reported numbers which gives them a false security.

On to the Robin Danielson Act; 2001 H.R. 360, presented by Representative Carolyn Maloney D NY; the bill would amend the Public Health Service Act requiring TSS to be reported to the CDC and would also force the industry to list the content of tampons on the box. The bill has been thrown out continually for the last 13 years. I looked into the tampon industry CEO's political contributions to Congressmen. You can guess the outcome. In my mind this isn't adding up. I believe the fate of my daughter was sealed because of this corporate conduct.

I'm currently starting a non-profit organization called, ***You ARE Loved***, (the letters ARE represent my daughter's initials, Amy Rae Elifritz) to educate girls in high schools across America of the symptoms of TSS, what to watch for and how to prevent it. They need to know! TSS symptoms resemble the flu! It isn't just super absorbent tampons, it's regular tampons too; anything with viscose rayon in it.

Warnings say to watch for a rash or peeling. The rash isn't likely to be presented until TSS is beyond recovery. The peeling of skin isn't until at least 7 days to 2 weeks after it begins (provided you aren't dead yet).

Playtex' annual report in 2007 reads, “Our Feminine Care marketing strategies have leveraged the strength of the *Playtex* brand that caters to the active, young female. Our Feminine Care marketing strategy centers on attracting first-time users, converting users of competitive products to our products and converting full-time feminine protection pad users to tampon users by communicating the advantages of tampons. In addition, we have developed the website, www.playtextampons.com, to provide information to adults and adolescents in choosing the right products“. These *adolescents* are the exact age group that hasn't developed the immunity to the *S. aureus* bacteria. They are the most vulnerable people in the world to TSS. How can we get the warning out to these young women that TSS is real and happening when the industry is pushing so hard to reel them in?

TSS of the 1980's is history. 2011 is NOW and TSS is happening! Lately I've seen medical professionals on TV talking about TSS. They keep repeating that TSS happens only with use of super tampons and to change frequently. My daughter changed every 4-6 hours! I know; I bought them! Actually the toxin begins to develop 2 hours after inserting a tampon and continues to multiply even while changing tampons. This toxin continues to increase as long as you are wearing tampons. The only way to dissipate the toxin in the vaginal canal is to use a pad for at least 8 hours between tampons. I've never heard anyone publically explain

why alternating with a pad is so important! It's a very understandable explanation. The only way to prevent TSS is with 100% cotton tampons or pads alone.

The reason you can't find cotton tampons in big stores is the companies that produce 100% cotton tampon are small. Cotton is expensive! These companies cannot afford the advertising to meet the requirements for shelf space at Walmart, CVS, or Walgreen. You have to order them online or go to a specific health food store. What 15 year old will wait 3 days for mail order delivery of a tampon when she needs it now? It's like a 3 day waiting period to buy a gun.

I need help getting the word out. I can point you to the research, the professional journals, and the microbiologists that can back me up on everything I mentioned. The medical community is in the dark and it's not their fault. I want TSS symptom posters on every ER wall in this country - symptoms and first actions. If a woman comes into the ER with a fever and flu, CHECK FOR A TAMPON! If she has one in, REMOVE IT!! Conscious or unconscious, remove the tampon or she will die. The medical profession needs to be educated in tampon related TSS; they are led to believe it no longer exists.

Shortly after my daughter's death I received a thank you message from a mother for saving her daughter's life. Last night I was told that because of my information a second life was saved. The feeling I get from these messages is beyond words. I take no credit for this because everyone needs to be educated. Saving lives is the result of the education.

There is now a test; the TSST-1 antibody test that will identify if a person has the antibodies which make it safe to use tampons containing viscose rayon. My local hospital doesn't offer it ... Yet. We need to test these young girls or provide symptom education for them and for medical staff along with funding for research to develop a vaccination that boosts antibodies to the toxin produced by Staphylococcus aureus. What more can I do as a citizen without help? It's time to recreate awareness for the new century of TSS. This is an important public service for this story to be told/this warning to be given.

Grieving Mother,

Lisa Elifritz

Special thanks to Maxim Organic for supplying samples of 100% cotton tampons for the young women I speak to.

The above is my interpretation of the research I have done since the death of my daughter to Toxic Shock Syndrome. It is not my intention to imply fault to any company, organization or individual. It has been approved by a nationally known microbiologist/toxic shock expert.