

SABS approves standard for reusable sanitary towels

Government has welcomed the announcement of washable reusable sanitary towel standard by the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS).



The SABS passed the first reusable sanitary standard: The manufacturer of Washable, Reusable Sanitary Towels (SANS 1812) on 6 May 2020. The publication of this standard is one of the first standards for washable sanitary pads in Southern Africa and is leading the way for other African countries to follow.

Welcoming the announcement during International Menstrual Hygiene Day on Thursday, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) said the momentous act allows women and girls another safe option to manage their menstruation.

“DWYPD offered support and guidance through the standards process because our position has always been one of pro-choice. Women and girls need safe choices for ways to manage their menstruation.

“Support offered by the department demonstrates the commitment the South African government has in meeting the diverse menstrual health needs of women and girls in South Africa through the department’s Sanitary Dignity Implementation Framework,” the department said.



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The department noted that many women and girls in South Africa face significant challenges when it comes to managing their menstrual cycle and often struggle, due to lack of access to affordable sanitary products. This hurdle, along with the stigma that surrounds menstruation can cause both emotional and physical harm.

With this new SABS standard, the department said, consumers can be confident that a washable reusable menstrual pad offers women and girls an option that is affordable and longer-lasting than a single-use pad.

“Due to restrictions in supply from regulations to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus, there is a general increase in the need for sanitary products for destitute families. The lockdown period also disrupted the normal sanitary dignity programme delivery channels such as schools. Displacement or relocation to places of safety and shelters has also left women and girls without access to sanitary products.

“Recognising that the coronavirus has brought about a disruption in sanitary dignity programmes delivered by most departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) the need to address menstrual health in society has become more important than ever. So this news is even more welcomed under our current state of disaster,” the department said.



Claims that reusable sanitary towels are SABS-tested are false

30 Sep 2019



The South African Coalition for Menstrual Health and Management (SACMHM) Products, Standards and Supply Chain Task Committee member Diana Nelson has commended the South African Government and SABS for their support, which has made this possible, even during Covid-19 pandemic.

“They worked to advance this important standard to help meet the diverse needs of women and girls in South Africa. The health and safety of women and girls menstruating is of utmost importance to our organisation, and that is why we are encouraged by the outstanding dedication of the South African Government to ensure this standard was published,” Nelson said.

Nelson said Days for Girls International were also on the Washable Task Committee working on the development of the standard for the past two years.

Director of Social Empowerment and Participation in the department of Women, Sipiwo Matshoba, said the new standard puts South Africa on the map as a leader in the menstrual health and hygiene sector.

“This is an important and exciting milestone that we have reached in order to broaden product choice in line with the sanitary dignity implementation framework,” Matshoba said.