



Women’s Hygiene and Health Survey Results Summary

An anonymous online survey about vaginal health and hygiene practices and product use was available to eligible participants between October 2012 and May 2014.

Summary of Results

What types of vaginal/genital health and hygiene products do Canadians use?

Canadian participants reported using a wide variety of commercially manufactured and homemade vaginal health and hygiene products and engaging in diverse health and hygiene-related practices. Approximately 92% of participants who completed the survey reported using at least one product in the vaginal/genital area, and the number of products ever used ranged from 0 to 15.

Products used by participants who completed the survey included commercially manufactured products advertised specifically as vaginal health and/or hygiene products, including vaginal douches, vaginal wipe clothes (i.e., disposable, one-time use wet wipes), vaginal washes, vaginal sprays, vaginal powders, moisturizers/lubricants, deodorant suppositories, and suppositories and creams for vaginal infections. Participants also reported a number of other products used in the genital area but not necessarily intended or marketed for use in the genital or vaginal area (e.g., liquid and gel hand sanitizers, body lotion, baby oil, baby wipes, shaving cream). Participants who completed the survey reported using such products both on the outer genital area and inside the vagina. Products were more likely to be used externally than internally, with the exception of some products such as suppositories and douches that are intended for internal use. The percentage of participants who used different products can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage of Women who Reported Using Genital Health and Hygiene Products

Health and Hygiene Product	Used inside the vagina	Used on external genitals
Vaginal moisturizers/lubricants	40.6%	30%
Vaginal tablets for symptoms/infections	34.8%	N/A

Anti-itch creams	25.8%	49.8%
Vaginal wipe cloths	4.2%	42%
Vaginal washes/cleansers	4%	11.7%
Baby/antiseptic wipes	2.6%	41.6%
Hand/body lotion	2%	21.2%
Baby oil	2%	10.4%
Vaginal deodorant suppositories	1.4%	N/A
Liquid/gel sanitizers	0.8%	1.8%
Vaginal sprays	0.6%	5.6%
Vaginal powders	0.6%	5.4%
Shaving cream	N/A	50.1%
Other products not listed	15%	

What types of menstrual products do Canadians use?

The majority of participants who completed the survey reported using menstrual products (75.3%). A large majority (88.4%) reported using non-scented products compared to 12.6% of participants reported using scented menstrual products. The most commonly used menstrual products were non-organic store-bought sanitary pads (52.3%) and tampons (49.5%), followed by organic store-bought sanitary pads (16.7%) and tampons (15.5%), reusable menstrual cups (e.g., DivaCup) (13.8%), homemade sanitary pads (e.g., flannel and cotton fabric) (5.4%), single-use menstrual cups (2.5%), and homemade tampons (0.5%). Some participants used other menstrual products including natural sea sponge tampons, menstrual sponge, reusable cloth pads, disposable and reusable panty liners, toilet paper, facial tissues, paper towels, and socks.

What types of vaginal/genital health and hygiene practices do Canadians engage in?

Canadian participants who completed the survey also reported engaging in a number of different practices related to vaginal health and/or hygiene, the most common of which was inserting sex toys into the vagina (39.2%) and waxing the genital area (26.4%). Of the participants who used sex toys, 76.3% reported using sex toys inside the vagina. Other practices, such as undergoing genital surgery for reasons other than cosmetic (2.4%), genital piercing (1.7%), dying pubic hair

(1.0%), tattooing the genital area (0.8%), anal bleaching (0.5%), vajazzling (applying rhinestones to the genital area) (0.4%), vaginal bleaching (0.4%), and having injections to enhance the G-spot, were less common.

Do Canadians use vaginal douches?

Canadian survey respondents reported using a variety of different commercially manufactured and homemade vaginal douches, such as water only solutions, water and vinegar solutions, and herbal solutions. Almost 83% of participants had heard of vaginal douching before completing the survey. Less than 20% of participants reported having ever used a vaginal douche. The most common reasons for using douches reported by Canadian participants included when they felt the vaginal area was unclean (50.3%), when they felt the vaginal area smelled (48.7%), after menstruation (51.4%), after sexual intimacy (36.3%), when they were experiencing vaginal symptoms like burning, itching, and irritation (27.9%), and whenever they felt like doing it (35.5%).

Conclusion

In total, 1471 participants (1435 participants living in Canada) completed our survey on vaginal health and hygiene practices and products. This research provides the first comprehensive look into Canadian's vaginal health and hygiene practices. The findings of this research indicate that a large number of Canadians are using products related to health/hygiene in and around their vaginal area. The results also indicate that individuals across the country are using a wide variety of vaginal health and hygiene products, both commercially manufactured and homemade. We are currently working on submitting the results to an academic journal focused on obstetrical and gynaecological health. The results of our study can be used by clinicians, doctors, and other researchers to better understand the types of vaginal health and hygiene practices and products are frequently used in Canada. Future research will explore how these practices and products are connected to vaginal problems such as infections and sexually transmitted infections.

If you are interested in learning more about the results of our study or have any questions or concerns, please contact us:

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