

MEDIA STATEMENT

**ISSUED BY DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
ATTENTION: JOURNALISTS AND NEWS EDITORS
SUNDAY: 1 MARCH 2025**

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DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES CALLS FOR TRANSPARENCY AND REGULATORY ASSURANCE FOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS

Pretoria | The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) has formally engaged the University of the Free State (UFS) following the release of a peer-reviewed study identifying the presence of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) in various sanitary pads and pantyliners available in South Africa.

The Department notes the significance of the research findings, which highlight the detection of certain chemicals associated with potential hormonal interference. While the study does not establish immediate or short-term health harm, it raises important concerns regarding long-term exposure and cumulative health risks. The purpose of the scientific research conducted at the university is not to create fear, anxiety, and panic, but to inform and empower consumers, policymakers, and health professionals through robust data and scientific evidence.

As the coordinating department responsible for advancing the rights, dignity and well-being of women and girls, DWYPD views menstrual health and sanitary dignity as critical components of gender equality and public health. The Department initiated discussions with UFS researchers to better understand the scientific findings, methodologies applied, and recommended next steps.

In addition, DWYPD welcomes the call made by the National Consumer Commission to initiate an investigation and a regulatory review process that will assist in ensuring that menstrual health products are safe, affordable and accessible, which remains a national priority.

Following this engagement, DWYPD commits to working collaboratively with the Department of Health and other relevant regulatory bodies, such as the South African Bureau of Standards, consumer protection agencies; Manufacturers and Suppliers of Sanitary Products, and Civil society and women's health advocacy organisations.

The engagement with all these relevant stakeholders will further strengthen and assess current regulatory frameworks governing menstrual health products; strengthen quality assurance and compliance mechanisms where necessary, while equally calling for transparency and regulatory assurance on menstrual hygiene products and consumer awareness.

The Department calls for calm while investigations proceed and commits to keeping the public informed as further verified information becomes available. Menstrual dignity is not a privilege; it is a right. The health and safety of women and girls in South Africa will remain a priority. Safeguarding the rights and health of women and girls, particularly those benefiting from government sanitary dignity programmes, remains a priority.

DWYPD reiterates that there is currently no directive for product withdrawal. However, transparent and science-led policies will remain central to the government's approach.

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Issued by: Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

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