

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 31, 2015

Dr. Francis S. Collins
Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1, One Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892-0160

Dear Dr. Collins:

We write to urge the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to take the lead on research that would determine the extent to which the presence of dioxins, synthetic fibers, chlorine and other contaminants in tampons and other feminine hygiene products pose any risk to women using these products. NIH is the nation's premier medical research agency that funds groundbreaking discoveries that improve health outcomes and save lives. We believe NIH research in this area can help determine risks presented by materials used in feminine hygiene products.

Recently, a tragic story involving tampons and Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) reinforced the need for much more research and a better understanding of additives used in feminine hygiene products. Laura Wasser, a young woman in her twenties, suffered a massive heart attack, lost her leg and part of her foot due to TSS.

Millions of American women use feminine hygiene products every day and yet there is still scant research on the potential health risks posed to women. Recent independent studies by women's health organizations have found chemicals of concern in tampons, pads and douches, including harmful chemicals, carcinogens, and reproductive toxins. This research, however, is incomplete. We need to know if diseases such as cervical cancer, endometriosis, infertility, and ovarian cancer may be linked to a woman's use of certain feminine hygiene products. That is why we urge NIH to research these products and help ensure that they are safe for women.

In addition to this request for more research, we also write to inquire about NIH's past research into these matters. Can you please detail what research related to women's health and feminine hygiene product safety NIH has completed?

Since being established in 1990, NIH's Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) has contributed to many medical advances for women. We hope ORWH will thoroughly research the health effects of chemical additives in feminine hygiene products as part of its research agenda. Women deserve to know that these products are safe and be provided with information they need to make informed purchasing decisions. We encourage you to protect the health of women everywhere through this valuable research.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,


CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress


JOHN CONYERS JR.
Member of Congress


DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress


RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress


BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress


SHEILA JACKSON LEE
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