

Ecological Sanitation and Hygienic Considerations for Women

Fact Sheet

The Importance of Keeping Dry Urine-Diverting Toilets Clean

Keeping both flush and dry toilets clean and functioning properly is obviously crucial as well as challenging. However, maintaining hygienic conditions is of particular importance with dry urine-diverting toilets since no water is used for flushing. Therefore, a brush and a little water for cleaning the bowl are needed. Particularly if these toilets are public or located in a school, they must be cleaned and maintained regularly by a caretaker, but even more importantly, visitors must be informed about the proper way to clean up after themselves when using the toilets. Non-biodegradable materials, such as tampons and sanitary pads, should not be left in the faecal chamber and visible traces of faeces or menstruation blood must be removed. It is essential that they are not only informed about how to do so, but that they are supplied with the necessary cleaning materials and wrapping materials for sanitary napkins and/or tampons.

Menstruation and Dry Urine-Diverting Toilets

During a woman's menstrual cycle, blood will inevitably enter the urine and faeces chambers when she is using the dry urine-diverting toilet. However, this organic material poses no threat to the sanitising or composting process in either the urine or faeces chamber nor to its future use as agricultural fertilizer or compost. The problem is purely an aesthetic one. Traces of blood could easily be left after a woman uses the dry urine-diverting toilets since there is no water to wash it down, and it will remain there for future users to see. A simple solution to the problem is to provide a brush and water to wash the toilet in the eventuality that blood is left. This can easily be accomplished with one to two cups of water along with a brush. There is no harm in adding a little water to the urine chamber.

Sanitation exhibition
in Nacka Municipality,
Sweden



Many types of urine-diverting "ecosan" toilets exist, including the one in this picture, but squatting models also exist.

However, it is important to pour as little water as possible into the faeces chamber since too much humidity can cause problems with odour. If the faeces chamber should become too moist, additional absorbing material like wood, dust or ashes can be added. Since sanitary napkins and tampons are mostly composed of non-biodegradable materials, they should not be disposed of in the faeces chamber. Instead, wrapping materials and a proper container for disposal should be provided. Depending on the solid waste management of the community, these materials can either be burnt or put with the residual solid waste. It is essential to inform women about how to clean up properly after themselves when they have their menstrual cycle by hanging a poster in the bathroom with instructions clearly explained.



Summary of Supplies

Needed for Cleaning and Maintaining the Toilets



Providing cleaning tools is essential in order to keep public toilets clean.

General Cleaning Methods for the Dry Urine- Diverting Toilets

Under normal circumstances users should not rinse the toilets with water. This should only be done when there are traces of blood or faeces left behind. When this does occur, a small amount of water and a brush should be sufficient for cleaning the toilet.

If the toilets are publicly used, as they are in a school, it is best if there is a regular caretaker who is responsible for cleaning the facilities. The caretaker should clean the urine bowl regularly with either vinegar or an acidic biodegradable agent. The faeces compartment can also be cleaned with these methods when needed. The tiles surrounding the toilet, the other parts of the toilet seat, and the squatting slabs should be cleaned with soda water or another biodegradable agent.

In several countries it is required to use a disinfectant when cleaning public or school toilets. If this is the case, it is essential that the disinfectant liquids be prevented from entering the faeces chamber since the decomposition process for organic matter relies on living micro-organisms that are destroyed by disinfectants.

Every toilet room should be supplied with:

- ✓ a poster describing the proper cleaning methods for the toilets
- ✓ a bucket of water with a scoop and a brush for cleaning traces of faeces or menstrual blood
- ✓ paper bags or wrapping material for the sanitary napkins and/or tampons*
- ✓ a bin for disposing of sanitary napkins and/or tampons*

The caretaker of the toilet room should be supplied with:

- ✓ vinegar or another acidic biodegradable agent for the urine bowl
- ✓ soda water or other biodegradable detergent for the other parts of the toilet
- ✓ toilet brushes

* Only necessary in toilet rooms designated for women or used by both sexes.



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