

FAQ - Global Standards for Safe Menstrual Products

What is a standard?

Standards can be thought of as an agreement that describes the best way of doing something. It could be about making a product, managing a process, delivering a service or supplying materials – standards cover a broad range of activities. Standards are built through consensus and represent the distilled wisdom of people with expertise in their subject matter and who know the needs of the organizations they represent – people such as manufacturers, sellers, buyers, customers, trade associations, users, regulators and more. Once a standard is finalized, it can be adopted and used to support regulation or certification.

Why are standards for menstrual products needed?

Despite being used daily by millions, menstrual products have never had a harmonized global safety or quality standard. Unlike condoms or wound dressings, menstrual products lack consistent regulations, creating gaps in consumer protection, product reliability, and transparency. Having standards makes clear best practices and controls for manufacturing, including testing, and supports improved access to safe, quality and performant menstrual products across the world.

What is ISO/TC 338?

ISO/TC 338 is the International Organization for Standardization's (ISO) technical committee (TC) responsible for developing standards in the field of menstrual products, covering all products intended for both single and multiple use, regardless of material.

Learn more about the products addressed by this standard, the technical committee and its member participants on the committee's [ISO.org website](https://www.iso.org).

What does it mean when a country or region adopts a menstrual product standard?

Once the standards are published, national standards bodies can choose to adopt the standards, either without changes to the technical standard content or with changes. While voluntary, some countries might reference the standards in regulation and require manufacturers to follow the standards, wholly or in part. Enforcement of the standards is an important piece of improving menstrual products around the world.

Regardless of whether a country adopts the standard or not, manufacturers can choose to voluntarily follow the menstrual product standard, helping to ensure the safety and quality of their products.

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What types of products fall under the scope of ISO/TC 338?

The committee covers all menstrual products designed to absorb or collect menstrual fluid, including:

- Internal products (e.g., tampons, menstrual cups)
- External products (e.g., pads, period underwear)
- Single-use and multi-use (reusable) products

Essentially, all manufactured menstrual products are included. ISO/TC 338 is starting by developing safety and general requirements of menstrual products as well as shared vocabulary. Work is also underway to scope menstrual product performance standards. Over time, the committee will draft updates to the standards as new science, innovations or other needs emerge. Visit the [ISO/TC 338 Committee Structure page](#) to learn more about how the development of the standards is coordinated.

Why has there not been a global standard for menstrual products before?

Historically, menstruation has been surrounded by stigma and limited public discussion. This has contributed to inconsistent regulatory attention, leaving menstrual products less regulated than other intimate or medical products. Thankfully, over 50 national standards bodies have come together in ISO/TC 338 to help usher in a change.

Who develops these standards?

ISO standards are developed by experts, including:

- Industry and manufacturers
- National authorities
- NGOs
- Academia
- Consumer interest groups

These experts are nominated by ISO's national members.

How can individuals or organizations join in the standard development work?

Anyone with relevant expertise can express interest in participating by contacting their national ISO member organization. Diverse participation is important and helps shape future standards and supports globally harmonized product safety. Note - each national standards bureau determines whether there is a cost to participate for committee members.

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Check the [ISO/TC 338 Participants](#) list to see if your country already participates and contact your national standards body to learn more. If you are interested in becoming a member, you can reach out to your national standards body by looking at the list of [ISO - Members](#) and finding their contact information. For additional assistance, [contact](#) the ISO/TC 338 Secretariat.

Is there support available for those interested in participating?

To ensure equitable representation, grants and training opportunities are available for stakeholders from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Upon joining ISO/TC 338, experts from LMICs can access funding for in-person meetings, ensuring their voices are represented in the standard development process and to facilitate eventual national adoption.

Others interested may find support through their national standards body (NSB). Reach out to your [ISO - Member](#) NSB to learn more.

How do menstrual product standards benefit people who menstruate?

Menstrual products are considered by many to be essential supplies. Safety and quality are basic expectations, and the standards help put controls in place. Countries or regions that adopt standards help ensure that people who menstruate have access to:

- Safer products, regardless of where they are purchased
- Better product performance and reliability
- Clearer product information and labeling

Harmonized standards across countries and regions also helps support trade across borders. Better global access to quality menstrual products, including multi-use (or, reusable) products, is aligned with 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Learn more about how the standards being developed connect to the SDGs on the [Secretariat's standards status catalogue](#).

How do these standards support menstrual health?

Menstrual health includes physical, mental, and social well-being. By improving product safety and accessibility, ISO/TC 338 supports people's ability to participate fully in daily life without stigma, risk, or uncertainty about product quality.

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How will global standards impact the menstrual product market?

As the standards are adopted and used, they will help:

- Harmonize safety and quality requirements across countries
- Improve consumer trust
- Support innovation based on clear performance criteria
- Create fairer market conditions for manufacturers
- Encourage positive, open conversations about menstruation worldwide

ISO/TC 338 is eager to welcome more national standards bodies and experts into its work.

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