

Toilet Paper – The Good bad and Ugly

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Disclaimer – This article was written with a distorted sense of humour in mind, it may “offend” OR give you a “laugh”, but if you read nothing else be sure to read the factual info under the heading “**Now let’s get serious and factual – all puns aside.**”

Have you ever been out at the park or in a shopping centre when that overwhelming attack of diarrhoea takes control of your every thought and causes you to dash for the nearest public convenience before your bowels erupt? What do you do in such a panic attack when the only available cubical has no toilet paper and just the cardboard tube is left on the dispenser? You could try and delaminate the cardboard and use it. However, this is like trying to use a sheet of rigid, non-absorbent Masonite or course grade sandpaper to wipe clean those most sensitive parts of your body. Ever thought about using your handkerchief (if you happen to have one), alternatively your socks? WHAT – socks you say!!!! They are probably the least expensive items of your clothing, which won’t be too obvious they’re missing as you walk out the public cubical. Now you have the secret backup plan for future reference, let's look at the pros and cons of cheap toilet paper.



Now here is a brand of toilet paper, which you probably haven't seen before.
I came across it in a Newcastle shop's lavatory.

Cheap Toilet Paper

Well, this brings me to a few observations regarding grades of toilet paper. There are those cheap brands, which range in quality from wafer thin where the slightest pressure resulted in a finger puncturing the fragile tissue and the user performs the first pass with soiled brown smelly fingers. Yuck! So after the initial shock, the user resorts to folding tissues into multiple layers and uses three times more length than if it had been quality toilet paper. Hence the cheap toilet paper is used up so quickly that its economy of price is brought into question.



Then there is the other end of the spectrum of cheap toilet paper. The course thick paper, which doesn't conform to the contours of your delicate body parts. This paper feels as though you have just grabbed a sheet of super rough woodworking sandpaper and besides wiping away the mess, the user has just performed a ritual hair removal, then finished off with removing 2 layers of skin.

Then there is 2 and 3 ply cheap brands, which for no apparent reason delaminate before they leave the roll. It starts becoming such a mess with the tear off perforations out of sync through the various layers, that single or multiple layers sheets begin tearing off in long strips up

the length of the roll. The narrow tissue strips become pretty well useless, unless the user makes a massive ball like a pompom, in order to utilise the toilet tissue. These balls of tissue then clog up the toilet's plumbing, creating yet another massive smelly waterworks problem with swirling turds threatening to overflow out of the bowl.

More Expensive Toilet Paper

Yes, you can certainly get some good quality paper at a price. It needs to be environmentally friendly, produced from sustainable resources, be strong enough to do a good job, and be soft enough not to cause irritation.

Having said that, many of the manufacturers use lots of fancy words on their packages in order to bewilder the purchaser into thinking they are getting a really fantastic product. Catch words and phrases like; “Enviro Care Fibre”, “Enviro Care”, “Satisfaction Guaranteed”, “Unique Blend”, “Love Handle”, “Handee”, “Luxury every Day”, “Softer and Silkier”, “Ultra Strong”, “Ultra Absorbent”, “Clean Sensation”, “Hypo-Allergenic” and “Air Weave Texture”, just to name a few.

I really wonder about these outrageous claims printed on the toilet roll packaging. What are they really comparing the claims to? “Softer” than what? “Stronger” than what? And what about the brand claiming “Handee”, - sounds like the hand will do all the wiping after the tissue punctures.

Then there is “Recycled” or “Recycled Fibre”. Now I don't know about you, but I don't like the idea of using toilet paper, which is recycled or reused after someone else has cleaned up their smelly crap with it. This is something to think about, isn't it!!!!

Now let's get serious and factual – all puns aside.

Two recent studies published in *Environmental Science & Technology* have shown that BPA and cousin chemical BPS used in “BPA-free products” but also highly estrogenic in nature, are much more pervasive in our common, everyday products than we could have imagined. The two new studies involved examination of hundreds of samples of paper from everyday

items such as toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, newspapers, magazines, tickets and even business cards.

Most of the paper samples tested, contained the hormone disruptor BPA, BPS or both. How and why the paper was so contaminated can be blamed on thermal paper, which we encounter most often as receipts but is also used in lottery tickets, luggage tags, and shipping labels. Thermal paper sports a coating of powdered BPA (serving as a developer for the heat-sensitive paper), and researchers have shown the stuff readily rubs off on our skin, and most relevant to this discussion. This thermal paper becomes mixed up with all the other paper it meets down at the recycling plant. The result: traces of BPA getting prime access to our nether regions via our eco-conscious tissues.

As for your backside, the safest option is to use toilet paper made from virgin pulp. This is an especially important area to protect from BPA and BPS as the skin in these areas is thin and delicate and is in very close proximity to the reproductive organs.

This is where some responsible manufacturers are starting to cater to consumer demands for chemical free sustainable products, by producing bamboo fibre toilet tissue. Bamboo paper is strong, soft, virgin pulp (not recycled), biodegradable, safe for septic systems and very sustainable. The Bamboo is one of the fastest-growing plants on the planet and as such great for carbon capture and negates the need to chop down old growth forests. So keep a look out for these new products on your supermarket shelves in the near future.



Really!!! – “Love Handle” toilet paper