

Toxic shock still a concern: specialist

BY CYNTHIA DAVID
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Women fearful of contacting toxic shock syndrome should not use extra-absorbent tampons, says Woodstock's new gynecologist.

In an interview Tuesday, Dr. Christopher Smith also recommended that women change tampons every three or four hours to prevent the build-up of bacteria in the body.

"Nobody's telling women to stop using tampons," he said, "but there is obviously a connection between the two."

The link between tampons and toxic shock syndrome (a rare disease caused when bacteria and toxins are absorbed in the bloodstream) was discovered last June in a number of menstruating women in the United States.

Although most of the information on the disease has come from the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Smith said he is aware of several unconfirmed cases in London, Ont., where he worked as an intern and resident before moving to Woodstock in December.

"It's hard to make a definite diagnosis," he said, "because these cases are not seen by gynecologists."

Symptoms associated with the disease are high fever, chills and a rash. The average age of toxic shock victims is 25, and a recent Wisconsin study predicts the disease will strike six out of every 100,000 women each year.

Dr. Smith said women have been warned against using extra-absorbent tampons because investigators found their contents promote the growth of bacteria. One super tampon, Rely, was pulled off the U.S. market in September when 60 per cent of the victims surveyed were found to be using it. This brand was never sold in Canada, but Dr. Smith said the same material has been found in a lower concentration in other brands.

Besides condemning the super tampons, the gynecologist said some doctors recommend women alternate tampons with sanitary pads during their period.

Dr. Smith said he has never seen a case of toxic shock syndrome in his practise. He deals regularly with vaginal infections and irregular bleeding, and assisted women through difficult pregnancies and caesarian births.

Dr. Smith graduated from Ottawa University's medical school in 1975, interned at London's Victoria Hospital and spent four years as a resident in obstetrics and gynecology at University Hospital. He has four children, aged two to 10, and says he's enjoying Woodstock. Before his arrival, the gynecologist's post had been vacant for nine months.

For women on the birth control pill, Dr. Smith had reassuring news.

"As long as women see their family doctor every year and have regular checkups, they can stay on the pill, depending on circumstances, up to the age of 35 or 40 years," he said. "After that, a woman should consider other forms of birth control, such as the IUD or permanent protection."

The ideal male pill will be "a long time in coming" he predicts, and possible replacements for the female pill are still riddled with side effects.

Before becoming pregnant, he suggests a woman take a two-month break from the pill. This time will allow the body to go through a normal menstrual cycle, and give the doctor a chance to accurately date the pregnancy.

Female smokers who are now pregnant or considering pregnancy should "quit for the duration of the pregnancy or at least cut down," he said. Research has shown that smoking adds an extra risk to a pregnancy, and babies of smokers are about eight ounces lighter at birth than babies of non-smokers.



Dr. Christopher Smith, Woodstock's new gynecologist, sits in his Ingersoll Avenue office. (Staff photo by Philip Walker)

Celebrate 60th anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Malcolm celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary at an Open House at Curries Hall on Sunday, February 22. The couple was married at

Central Parsonage, Woodstock, on February 23, 1921.

They farmed in Springford for five years, were in Thamesford at the Seventh

Line for six years, then in Culloden for six years coming to Sweaburg area in 1939. They came to their present residence in 1946 from the farm.

They have five children Russell Malcolm, of Tillsonburg; Mrs. Vern (Marion) Carter, of RR 5, Ingersoll; Mrs. Archie (Anna) Longworth, RR 5, Ingersoll; Mrs. Archie (Merle) Brenneman, RR 6, Woodstock. A son, Finley, was deceased in 1936.

They have 19 grandchildren and 33 great-grandchildren. Mrs. Malcolm enjoys doing paintings, crocheting and her church work.

The couple received congratulations from friends and relatives as well as a letter from the leader of the opposition MP Joe Clark, Dr. Bruce Halliday, a provincial scroll, flowers and gifts.



MR. AND MRS. HUGH MALCOLM



MR. AND MRS. BRIAN DOUGLAS KNOTT

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Brian Knott & Brenda Roberts*