

Model Lauren Wasser Who Lost Leg to Toxic Shock Syndrome Warns Against Dangers of Tampons

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Dana Dovey, Newsweek 1 hour 53 minutes ago

In 2012, model Lauren Wasser lost her leg and nearly lost her life to toxic shock syndrome. She has recently told her story in a personal essay published in *InStyle* in an effort to warn others of the dangers of this potentially deadly condition. She also hopes to raise awareness for the passage of a bill that will hopefully better protect others from this very real and serious health issue.

Wasser contracted toxic shock syndrome, or TSS, after using a tampon during her period in 2012. The model first experienced flu-like symptoms but they quickly escalated. Eventually Wasser had a serious heart attack which left her on life support, *The Independent* reported. The model was placed in a medically induced coma as her organs began to shut down and her fever rose out of control.

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Although she recovered from the heart attack and organ failure, the disease left her with gangrene, a serious bacterial infection, on her right leg. The infection was so bad that it required amputation. Wasser will require further amputation in the following months because the residual pain in her left leg is still quite significant.

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Lauren Wasser is open about her personal experiences with TSS. Tommaso Boddi/Getty Images for AT&T AUDIENCE Network

According to [Healthline](#), TSS is a bacterial infection caused by *Staphylococcus aureus*. This species of bacteria normally lives on the skin surface and in the female reproductive tract. However, when the bacteria breach the skin or mucous membrane to enter the blood system, they may cause illness.

Staphylococcus aureus already safely lives inside the vagina, but this bacteria will breed and grow inside of highly absorbent, blood-saturated tampons. When the tampon is inserted or removed it causes tiny tears in the vagina, allowing the bacteria to enter the bloodstream. Once inside the bloodstream, the bacteria produce toxins, and the body's reactions to these toxins lead to the life-threatening symptoms associated with TSS. Leaving in a tampon for an extended period of time give the bacteria more time to breed and thus increase the risk of contracting the infection.

Although the illness is most common in menstruating women, especially those who use super absorbent tampons, it can also occur in men, children and women who do not use tampons; surgery or a wound could also expose someone to the bacteria.

Wasser advocating for the passage of the Robin Danielson Feminine Hygiene Product Safety Act, which will require feminine hygiene product companies to tell the public exactly what is in products, along with what their possible long-term health effects are.

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“Shockingly, the bill has been rejected 10 times,” Wasser writes in *InStyle*. “I am writing this in hopes that you will understand that we, as women, need more education about TSS. It is time that we, as consumers, demand safer products and more transparency about what is going into our bodies.”