

3



Chapter 3

The future of hygiene

Despite the value of good or improved hygiene and education, strong forces in the form of taboos and stereotypes are hindering progress. So what forces are pushing in the other direction – moving forward rather than holding us back?

We live in a time when innovation and the rethinking of old ways of doing things are shaking up how we live our lives. And it is happening all around us. Seemingly everything – from the way we bank to the way we consume media and even take taxis – is being redesigned, reprioritized and digitized to be more accessible and more affordable. And with increasing access to the internet and the falling cost of mobile phones, development is quicker than ever. So what does this mean for the future of hygiene? How can innovation and technology serve as problem solvers and forces for change? And what new behaviors and ways of communicating do they enable that help break the silence on hygiene-related issues?





Fostering good hygiene habits

Sometimes the most important innovations are not the ones with the most advanced technology or the ones that demand huge investments, but the simple ones that manage to change everyday behaviors through smart and intuitive design. Hand washing is a typical case where a simple change in behavior can have significant health effects by reducing the risk of infections. So how can we use design and technology to make people wash their hands more often?

A number of creative solutions are emerging that aim to foster good hygiene habits: from self-sterilizing door handles, which use UV light to identify bacteria, to electronic hand hygiene recording and reminding systems that remind healthcare workers to wash their hands before interacting with a patient. Other examples include an automatic hand sanitizer designed especially for kids, dispensing sanitizer in the form of soap bubbles, or STAND, a sustainable sink/urinal combination. This innovative solution reuses water from a sink above to rinse out the urinal, thus effectively reducing not only water consumption but also the materials used during the production process, while encouraging hand washing by placing the sink in the urinal user's line of sight.

The promises of hygiene data and digital solutions

The possibilities to collect and analyze data using modern technology offer completely new opportunities for customized care and individually adapted products or services. A number of mobile phone apps for managing menstruation have emerged, such as “Period Tracker” or “Periodical”, allowing users to track and predict cycles based on historic data and user averages.

Also when it comes to professional hygiene care, technology enables customized products and services.

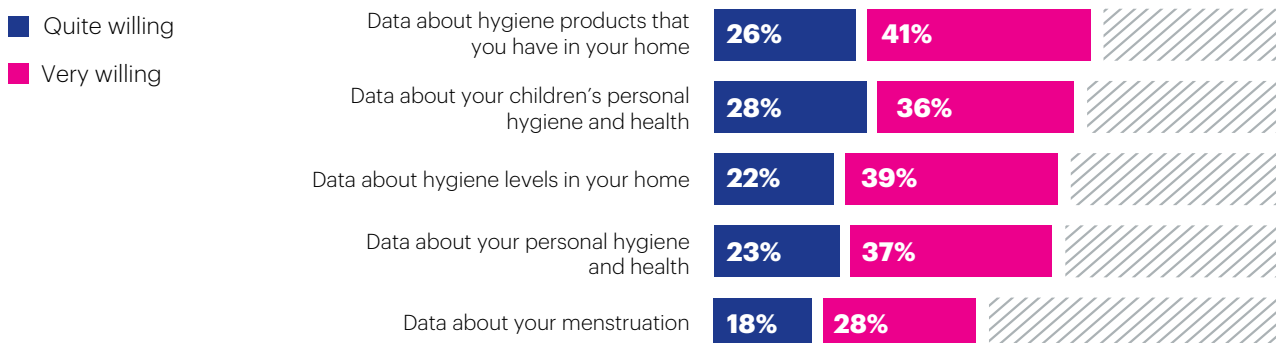
In nursing homes, residents’ quality of life is improved if they can urinate and defecate more often on the toilet than in the pad, based on individual voiding patterns (when and how much they urinate). Risks associated with incontinence, like skin damage, are avoided and dignity is improved. The TENA Identifi solution combines sensor technology and a web-based user interface to help caregivers map voiding patterns, which can be highly individual, and develop personal continence care plans, with a customized product mix and toilet assistance schedule. These plans help professional healthcare workers do an even better job, increasing job satisfaction and often lowering costs.

The benefits of customized solutions seem to outweigh concerns over privacy in relation to the gathering and sharing

of personal data. A majority of respondents in the Hygiene Matters Survey said they would be willing to share different types of personal data to receive personalized services and products connected to their hygiene and health. However, results from the Hygiene Matters Survey also suggest that in some areas, increased access to hygiene data may not always be a good thing. More people think that solutions that give us more information on hygiene levels will actually make us more obsessed with hygiene (28%), than those who think they will help us worry less (20%). Particularly in markets with more developed hygiene standards, many people say they would actually turn down the possibility of knowing more about bacteria levels in daily life. These results point to the importance of carefully considering how data is processed and used. Without a clear understanding of the context, data risks being misinterpreted or leading to unwanted behavior, such as avoiding certain situations for fear of germs, rather than improving personal hand washing practices.

Hygiene Matters Survey 2016/17

A majority of respondents are willing to share personal data about hygiene:



Many people say they would actually turn down the possibility of knowing more about bacteria levels in daily life.



Closing the loop

Global challenges, and the UN Sustainable Development Agenda to meet them, are not limited to poverty and inequality. Efforts for social and economic progress can no longer be seen in isolation from climate and environmental factors. Increasingly, sustainability is part of both corporate and non-profit agendas. Concepts such as the circular economy are becoming catalysts for new business models, partnerships and innovations.

A general challenge for the personal hygiene sector is finding business models that allow both collection and separation of the different materials contained in a product. Moreover, there needs to be a market for what is recycled. "This is a challenge in the area of baby diapers, for example, where bacterial concerns make materials recycling difficult. At present the best solution is energy recovery from incineration, but we're working on trying to find other solutions," says Kersti Strandqvist, Senior Vice President Group Sustainability at Essity.

Alternative solutions are emerging, not least in Europe, where the EU Circular Economy agenda puts pressure on member states to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill or for incineration. Methods for recycling of absorbent hygiene products such as baby diapers, feminine hygiene products and incontinence products have been developed, but have only recently started to become technically viable and implemented, for example by companies in the UK and Italy.

"The EU puts pressure on member states to reduce waste."

Circular economy

Circular economy is essentially about transitioning from a linear economic model – in which things are manufactured, used and then thrown away – to a system where products and materials retain their value as much as possible. This means that products or materials that have reached the end of their life cycle should be used to create additional value in another product's life cycle. Resource-efficiency is key and we should use as little non-renewable materials as possible and minimize waste. It also means using renewable energy and bio-based resources, as well as designing products for resource-efficiency, recovery and recycling.

Read more: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/>

A platform to talk openly

Digitalization and technological innovation are promising in their own right, creating new possibilities for smart design, and individualized and sustainable solutions. But information and communication technology (ICT), and the behavior it enables, may be the most transformative force in challenging the status quo on hygiene.

ICT is enabling people around the world to take to the internet and popular social media platforms to break down taboos and help eliminate stigma by mainstreaming the conversation and driving action. Combined with the simplicity of using a search engine like Google to find out information about specific conditions and solutions, online chatrooms offer men and women a safe (and potentially anonymous) platform to talk openly about issues such as incontinence, body odor, or other embarrassing conditions. One such chatroom is the Incontinence Support Group and Forum, which offers support for those dealing with incon-

tinence: "A friendly online community where you can share information, experiences and support each other." Other examples include the Continence Foundation of Australia, which supports patients and their caregivers and is supported/financed by the Australian government. Users can also post questions that will be answered by a nurse: www.continence.org.au/forum/index. There's even a website called IncontinenceDating.com that offers a place for people to meet others with similar conditions to them, thus eliminating any self-consciousness during what is already a socially awkward moment for many.

Raising awareness and solving problems in a connected world

By connecting people all over the world, the internet and social media offers unprecedented possibilities for social change. People are no longer restricted to interacting with those in their geographical community, but can find and form communities online, uniting around a common cause. When it comes to challenging taboos and stereotypes related to hygiene, social media has enormous potential for raising awareness and inspiring change. Hashtags such as #HappyToBleed, #RedFit and #PeriodPositive challenge the silence on menstruation, and global movements such as UN Women's #HeForShe aim to involve men in female empowerment.

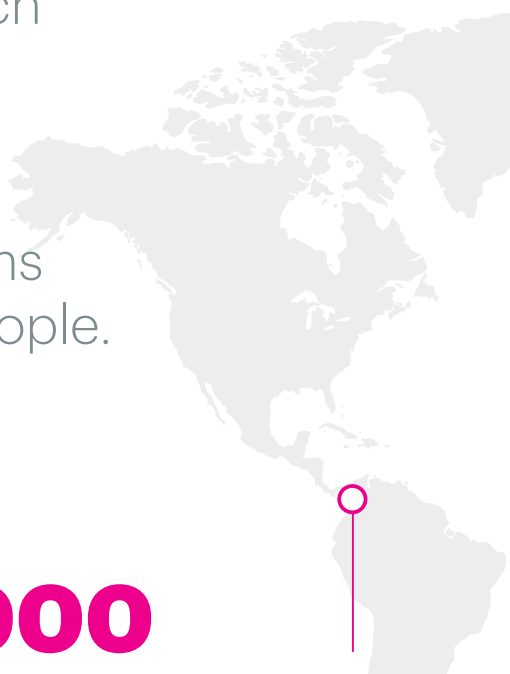
New partnerships and methods of working to solve hygiene-related challenges are also emerging. In 2012, for example, the Water and Sanitation Program of the World Bank organized a "hackathon". Developers all over the world were invited to draw on the organizers' expertise and use their skills to solve sanitary issues, such as developing an app to increase children's awareness of hygienic habits.



The Red.fit campaign aims to tackle the "last taboo" in women's sport by empowering women to keep active while on their periods.

Investing in knowledge

Knowledge of the link between hygiene, health and quality of life is key to progress, and with more than 500 million people using Essity's products every day, the company is in a unique position to reach out to women, men, children, parents, relatives, healthcare professionals and caregivers across the globe. We have conducted hygiene education programs for many years, reaching millions of people. Below are some examples from 2015.



107,000

In Colombia, our joint-venture company Familia educated 107,000 expectant mothers about motherhood and pregnancy. Familia runs several other educational programs, such as teaching young girls about menstruation and puberty.





37,000

Our people teach children around the world about handwashing and in 2015, 37,000 children participated in different programs. One tool is “Ella’s handwashing adventure,” an app for iPad and Android devices that has become very popular. So far, the app has been downloaded 45,000 times. For slightly older kids (6-12 years old) there is a toolkit following a boy called Max. An international study of ours showed that one out of two parents believe that more education around hand hygiene in school would reduce sick days.

40,000

In Malaysia, we educated 40,000 girls about menstruation and what happens in the body during puberty. The program was designed for primary schools with a focus on girls in the age range when menstruation often begins.



33,000

We provided training for 33,000 nurses worldwide in incontinence and skincare, for example, at this workshop in India.



Leave no one behind: Progress in India

More than 400 million of India's 1.2 billion citizens still live in poverty, and India has the largest number of people in the world practicing open defecation. But things are set to change, as Narendra Modi, India's Prime Minister, has made sanitation and hygiene a top priority.

Through the Government of India's Swachh Bharat (Clean India) Mission, there is a goal to end open defecation practices in India by 2019, well ahead of the UN Sustainable Development Goal target date of 2030. The Global Sanitation Fund (GSF)-supported program in India has been instrumental in establishing methods and practices to enable the realization of the Swachh Bharat Mission. Between 2011 and 2015, open defecation-free (ODF) environments were provided for 726,000 people, two million people were given access to improved toilets, and 3.24 million people to hand washing facilities.

In 2015, the GSF program also supported the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in the organization of the 'Innovation III' conference, for the development and dissemination of sustainable WASH technologies in support of Swachh Bharat. The conference brought together representatives from all State Governments. Approximately 30 innovators showcased their products, and a handbook on innovative technologies was released.



Partnering with government to enable change

“In a country where pervasive caste and gender inequalities threaten life itself, over 300 million women and girls in India try to squat in a sari, while holding a cup of water to cleanse themselves and keeping an eye out for molesters. Imagine how much more complex and impossible this becomes every month during a woman’s menstrual period! It is time for the entire development community to unite behind this cause.” Archana Patkar, Program Manager, WSSCC.

WSSCC was one of the partners contributing to the design of the Swachh Bharat Mission before its launch in 2014, focusing on including equity, innovation, rapid action and learning, as well as sustainability aspects. In 2015, WSSCC also organized the first ever national workshop to define the verification of open defecation-free (ODF) status in India, followed by the first national sharing of innovations, best practices and failures in sanitation and hygiene.

WSSCC continues to be involved in the program, for example, conducting research to better understand how people with disabilities can engage in community-led sanitation and hygiene activities, and to incorporate the needs of women and girls in program planning and implementation.

“Being part of this program, we realize that women can emerge and play a leading role in positively shaping behavior and impacting the attitude and practices of a community. Focusing on women and their social roles can help more women and women’s groups emerge as leaders for community mobilization. Further, we feel our experience in making the village ODF can be extended to ensure achievement of other needs in the village.” Statement from the ‘Nigrani Samiti’ (Women’s Monitoring Committee) in Jhanjharpur Block, Madhubani District, Bihar, India.