

# Business Standard

## A brand new world of health and hygiene products in the post Covid scenario

Cleanliness remains the best defence against Covid-19, vaccine or no vaccine. Business Standard brings you products that are critical to keep yourself and your surroundings sterile

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*Your tools and tackles should ideally include disinfectants, detergents, dish wash and cleaning agents across a spectrum of surfaces. Source: Hindustan Unilever Ltd*

If there is one positive outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has just got to be the spike in hygiene consciousness in the country, and the noticeable surge in the sale of personal and home hygiene products such as detergents, washing powders, sanitisers, floor and toilet cleaners.

Says 35-year-old Delhi-based Mala Awasthi, “The real Swachhta abhhiyan came about in 2020. Personally, I have never washed my hands, bathed so many times, or sanitised the groceries and vegetables, as much as I did last year. But these habits are now for keeps.”

With hand hygiene in particular becoming sacrosanct, FMCG majors like Reckitt saw the biggest growth in handwash segments – sanitisers and liquid. The pandemic has brought a behavioural shift towards hygiene products across the country. Says Dilen Gandhi, Director-Marketing, Reckitt South Asia Health & Nutrition: “Consumers have started regarding health and hygiene products as essential commodities to be bought regularly. This has led to an increase in the purchase of products such as soaps, hand wash, hand sanitisers,

germ kill sprays and wipes. As a result, all segments grew in both consumption and penetration. The emphasis on cleaning has moved from just “visibly clean” to “specialist disinfectant products” for cleaning the consumers' homes as well.”

What has the growth been in numeric terms? Says Sanjesh Thakur, Partner, Deloitte India: “Today we are about \$10 billion globally and are looking at a CAGR of about 12-13 per cent. In India, we are about \$480-500 million in size and growing at a good pace of 12-13 per cent in the disinfectant and sanitiser categories.” What is triggering demand apart from Covid-19? “A key stimulant of demand is the proliferation of disinfectants, sanitisers and hygiene products across the globe by virtue of one country shipping out to the other, in the form of donations,” says Thakur. This has created a lot of awareness, education and first-level demand in many areas. Besides, e-commerce has reduced holding costs, eased logistics and retained consumer secrecy. Add to that the brands are investing in creating awareness among their consumers.

Says Prabha Narasimhan, Executive Director & VP–Home Care, South Asia, Hindustan Unilever Limited: “There are a lot of things we have done at HUL to improve awareness and reach. For instance, our entire “wash” programme that talks about hygiene, or in-home care business led by Domex powder which talks about keeping the toilets that have been built, clean and germ free. HUL is actually the first company to come out with an advertisement that talked about handwashing per se and not handwashing with Lifebuoy soap. The advertising, in fact, talked about washing your hand with any soap, and was a responsible step towards building awareness about handwashing in general.”

### **What’s available**

Products with history and legacy such as Dettol, Surf Excel, Harpic, Lizol remain the most trusted. But even some of these have launched variants such as laundry sanitiser, disinfectant spray and multi-use wipes. More recently, Dettol launched Dettol Black, promising Dettol Handwash’s protection from 100 illness-causing germs in a new 100 per cent recycled bottle in India. HUL launched a “nature protect” range of products including floor cleaner, fruits and vegetable cleaner, surface disinfectant spray, wipes, laundry detergent, with plant-based sources such as Rin with Neem extracts.

A new breed of green and natural products has emerged to address growing concerns about the exposure of the skin to harmful chemicals. From Vim to The Better India in the dishwash category, from Savlon to Koparo Clean, or from Ariel and Rin in detergents, many are making the big switch to ‘natural’ products. Says Simran Khara, Founder Koparo Clean, “Koparo is from coconut which is a fantastic cleaning agent. When coconut is processed, it works best as a surfactant. You can use petroleum-based ones many of which are full of harmful chemicals such as ammonia, chlorine and various kind of acids or natural ones made out of coconut or sugarcane. On efficacy, they are at par with petroleum-based products but cost 1.5x or 2x more. As we scale in volumes, we hope to bring down the price premium.” Their clients are primarily women in the 35-50 age group, who are keenly involved in home affairs. Says Khara, “I find a lot of people today are no longer relegating the purchase decision of cleaning products to the house help. Even affluent people are directly involved in buying and take great pride in doing proper due diligence, investigating products on various online and offline channels.”

She explains that a whole lot of chemicals used today are not necessarily adding to the cleaning efficacy of the product. Optical brighteners in laundry products, for instance, only make the clothes stand out on the shelf in fluorescent bright shades. Says Rashmi Arora, 42-year-old Mumbai-based homemaker and an HR professional, “Everywhere we seem to be making natural choices but in cleaning more than ever before, we are exposing ourselves to a lot more toxins. It’s important to get good and safe cleaning products. I am using Vitamin C serum, neem, amla, onion hair oil for my skin care. I eat organic food. For cleaning too, it’s imperative to buy green products that are safe for all especially the children and elderly.”

### **Best hygiene practices**

India is no stranger to hygiene. Even today, most women will not enter the kitchen without a morning bath. No one enters a temple without a shower. No yogic practice is performed without cleansing the body first. However, the awareness that we need to keep our public places clean has taken a beating. According to mystic, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, “Cleanliness is not a discipline. It's an expression of love and regard for all

lives around us. Whatever we perceive, if it is pleasant upon our senses, we experience it one way. If it is unpleasant upon our senses, that becomes filth in our experience.”

How often should one use the sanitiser--three, seven or ten times a day? Says Dr Anita Mathew, Infectious Disease Specialist, Fortis Hospital, Mulund, “There is no right frequency for using hand-sanitisers as such. But most hand sanitisers in the market are not as per the guidelines and norms, which can lead to skin problems. Therefore, hand washing is the best exercise. The best method is to wash your hands with soap and water.” Hand sanitisers are best used when there is no access to water and soap. Its frequent use will lead to dryness of hands or skin allergies, therefore moisturise your hands from time to time.

The right level of alcohol content in a sanitiser is 70 per cent, says Mathew. Chlorhexidine (an antiseptic molecule) is also preferable in the hand sanitiser category. If you don't have access to running water then the next best thing to do is use alcohol-based wet wipes.

Also note, that we are not supposed to be using a tissue like we use a handkerchief. Tissues are meant to be for one-time use only. One should not keep hanging on to a same tissue for long. An eco-friendly approach towards it will be to use a handkerchief that can be washed.

When it comes to mopping homes, should you add disinfectants. Says Dr Sandeep Patil, Chief Intensivist, Fortis Hospital Kalyan, “Any floor disinfectant or soap is sufficient to kill viruses and germs. Frequency depends on the movement of people in and out of home. Otherwise, once a day would be fine. Disinfecting frequently touched objects like door knobs, handrails, etc. should be done 2 to 3 times a day.”

Steer clear of spurious products. Examine the content and the labelling – right through last year, there have been lots of websites trying to sell Covid-related counterfeit products. Some companies are simply playing upon consumers' fear psychoses and one must see verified customer reviews on e-commerce channels to know feedback on newer brands.

## **Menstrual hygiene**

Many people ignorant of the hygienic health practices end up having adverse health condition. In women, lack of menstrual hygiene is a very important risk factor for reproductive tract infections. There is very high incidence of bacterial, yeast infection, white discharge which comes with a foul smell and this is rapidly increasing. Health and hygiene brands like &Me did a survey couple of months back where they asked women – do you have white discharge? Says Sheta Mittal Co-Founder &Me, “We found that eighty percent women are just living with the condition, not doing anything about it and not knowing how to assess if it is normal or abnormal. While our top selling product is PCOS drink, the second bestselling is UTI – it has picked up crazily because one in two women have UTI. Our PCOS and PCOD drink having pack of 8 costing Rs 600, and a UTI drink (pack of 8 Rs 680 and pack of 30 for Rs 2,550) is a bestseller. The UTI drink has cranberry that removes bacteria, herbs that reduce pain and itching. It has micronutrients that help you replenish all the nutrients that get lost because of frequent urination. This has 100% efficacy if you take product for 15 days and it can lead to hundred percent reduction in burning, itching and UTI.”

One must follow dos and don'ts for intimate hygiene and more so in summer season when incidences of infections increase. Make sure that the innerwear is made of natural fibre like cotton, rather than synthetic material so that it allows air to pass through it. Avoid tight pants in summers and make sure you are well ventilated and changing innerwear. For sanitary napkins, plastic may be the best material as it is adaptable. But if you are using it too frequently, it can lead to rashes as plastics don't allow anything to pass, not even air. Green products in this category are coming in the form of green sanitary napkins, menstrual cups, tampons. Says Mittal, “The only thing people struggle with in menstrual cup is the insertion and there is a great taboo about inserting anything inside the vagina. Ditto for tampons which are yet to come to India which allow you to even swim- culturally we are against inserting anything inside the vagina and that virginity dogma remains. Using period panties have still not come in India. But I do think we need lingerie that would be better absorbent during period days.”

Its best to keep things simple. And some of the easiest hygiene practices are also the most effective that each one of us can follow- washing your hands, face and feet with soap and water, keeping your footwear out of the house after coming home from outside, taking a shower after coming from outside, that will help get rid

of all bugs on your body, sweeping your house at least once in a day. When it comes to food, avoid eating from outside and eat food only after you wash your hands. Sneezing and cough etiquette to be followed properly. Wear a mask at all times when you venture out and lastly, if you are feeling ill, staying inside your home is a must.

**Table: what's popular and what's new and premium in the cleanliness universe**

| Hygiene category                              | Conventional brands and pricing (Rs)   | Premium brands and pricing (Rs)  | Value proposition offered by premium products  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Hand Washes                                   | Savlon (200ml for Rs 59), Dettol (200ml for Rs 99), Lifebuoy (190ml for Rs 85)   | Koparo Clean (500ml for Rs 349), The Man Company (250ml for Rs 249), Pure Cult (300ml for Rs 299)                      | Chemical free, Essential Oils, Hypoallergenic and pH balanced  |
| Sanitisers                                    | Himalaya PureHands (50ml for Rs 25), Dettol Instant (50ml for Rs 25), Savlon (55 ml for Rs 27)                         | Treewear Ecological Living (50ml for Rs 299), Klenz Plus (50ml for Rs 125)   | Herbal, Handmade product, Non-Toxic, and Essential oils used   |
| Detergents                                    | Surf Excel (Rs 118 per kg), Ariel (Rs 187 per kg), Rin (Rs 73 per kg)  | Born Good (450ml for Rs 219), Tropical Breeze (Rs 400 per Litre), Rustic Art (Rs 285 per kg)                           | Eco-Friendly, Bio degradable, Handmade, Sustainable  |
| Dishwashers                                   | Vim tub (500g for Rs 155), Pril tub (500g for Rs 140), Exo round (500g for Rs 120)                                     | The Better India (500ml for Rs 194), CARE Natural (400ml for Rs 259), Sacred Earth (500ml for Rs 499)                  | Organic, built-in salt, suitable for hard water areas, Phosphate-free and Eco friendly                           |
| Washing powders                               | Ghari (Rs 169 per kg), Fena (Rs 110), Nirma (Rs 137)   | From vedas (Rs 270 per kg), L&S Smart Wash (3kg for Rs 699)  | Chemical Free, Bio-degradable, Septic Safe   |
| Floor Cleaner                                 | Domex (Rs 180 per Litre), Mr. Muscle (Rs 172 per Litre), Lizol (Rs 180 per Litre)                                      | Nimyle (Rs 282 per Litre), Koparo Clean (500ml for Rs 299)   | PH Neutral, Herbal, Biodegradable (waste water can be used to water plants), Eco-friendly, Kids and Pet friendly |
| Toilet Cleaner                                | Harpic (Rs 169 per Litre), Domex (Rs 170 per Litre), Sainifresh (Rs 140 per Litre)                                     | PureCult (500ml for Rs 299), Care Natural (400ml for Rs 199), Soaptreez (500ml for Rs 195)                             | Chemical Free and Non-Toxic  |
| Women Care Products such as Menstrual Hygiene | Whisper Extra Long (7 Counts for Rs 80), Stayfree Extra Long (7 Counts for Rs 39), Nine Extra Long (6 Count for Rs 32) | Sirona (Rs 299 per Menstrual Cup), Pee Safe Tampons (6 Count for Rs 99), Bella Intima (Pantyliners 36 pads for Rs 214) | Eco-Friendly   |
| Men Care Product for Intimate Hygiene         | Muuchstac (100ml for Rs 375), Mancode Intimate Wash (100ml for Rs 350), Rustic Art (100ml for Rs 275)                  | Skin Elements Men's (120ml for Rs 699), Parsh (100ml for Rs 599), Urbangabru (100ml for Rs 699)                        | Natural Ingredients, Organic   |

Source: TechSci Research

