

How to leverage your medical packaging to drive sustainability

As companies build sustainability into their strategic plans, product design, manufacturing processes, product life cycle management and logistics, certain choices can have much more far-reaching effects than are immediately envisioned.

Packaging materials are a perfect example of this: when we look beyond primary concerns such as cost, how well the packaging protects the contents, and how it is disposed of, we discover that **packaging choices can have sustainability impacts that go beyond the more obvious advantages.**

To get the most sustainability leverage out of your packaging choices, build these considerations into your packaging strategy

1. Replace plastics with paper

Designing packaging that doesn't require plastics reduces your dependency on fossil resources – something that is on everyone's sustainability radar. There are now many renewable materials on the market that offer the same barrier properties as plastic. With so many options available, it's important to work closely with a credible partner to explore which options will deliver on sustainability promises and be the best fit for your application.

Beyond switching from plastics to paper, carefully consider which paper you choose. For example, most heat seal papers can only be disposed of through incineration, virtually negating the sustainability advantages of switching to paper. Non-coated, and surface-coated papers may offer more sustainable disposal options.

2. Simplify packaging designs

Simplifying packaging designs and reducing un-necessary over-packaging, is a key step towards more sustainable packaging. In some cases, such modifications add bulk or weight to packaging, but this could be a necessary compromise to achieve other goals such as recyclability. It's key, therefore, to carefully analyse and weigh alternatives against each other, and always keep the overall environmental impact in mind.



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3. Design for recyclability

Look for packaging solutions that are renewable, recyclable or compostable, already in the design phase. Recyclability demands that each ingoing material is recyclable, or that non-recyclable components are separable and free from toxic substances. The use of plastic laminates is also a big obstacle in achieving recyclability. Strive to use mono-materials where technically possible, even when it may require slightly heavier packaging, as the overall environmental impact will likely be significantly improved.

In order to ensure that heavier, bulkier materials don't have a worse environmental impact than their reuse or recycling compensates for, you have to be sure that the packaging will actually be recycled. This requires you to think outside your own supply chains and systems and look at the larger infrastructure for recycling (collection etc.).

4. Demand more from your suppliers

To maximise your sustainability work, require your suppliers to constantly improve their manufacturing processes to use less energy and water and release less emissions. And always ask to see their sustainability reports and targets. Demanding more of suppliers and partners helps improve sustainability beyond the reaches of your own business.

5. Don't let your responsibility end when the package leaves your hands

Take responsibility for your packaging materials throughout their lifetime. That means providing clear information on how to dispose of the packaging in the least harmful way, and working with other actors to improve the infrastructure for safe disposal, recycling etc. of packaging materials.

At BillerudKorsnäs, we're convinced that replacing fossil-based products with paper, wood, biofuel and other forest products is the best choice for the future. Today we are a world-leading provider of primary fiber-based packaging materials and innovative packaging solutions. We've received a number of awards and distinctions for our efforts, including a Gold rating from EcoVadis four years in a row and we are number 1 in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index.



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Among the innovations we are proud of are our new fiber form packages, Repel Pure, our totally biobased grease resistant paper, and Xpression Ecom, the substitute for single-use plastic mailing bags.

Our motto is “We challenge conventional packaging for a sustainable future”. If you are also ready to challenge old ways of doing things in order to reach your sustainability goals, we’d love to partner with you to get there. For more details visit <https://www.billerudkorsnas.com/sustainability>



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