

Dignity for R5: Shoprite's new toiletries target hygiene inequality

In response to the more than 14 million people in South Africa - one in five - affected by hygiene poverty, Shoprite has expanded its R5 basket of goods to include essential toiletries which retail for just a single coin.

Hygiene poverty encompasses both inadequate sanitation infrastructure and limited access or affordability of essential items like soap, shampoo, menstrual and oral care products.

Following significant investment into extensive product development, Shoprite is adding a 2-in-1 shampoo and conditioner as well as a body wash to its growing range of R5 products. Both items are sold as concentrates in 50ml sachets and, when diluted with 150ml water, make enough to last for up to 20 washes. This works out to approximately 25 cents per wash.

In 2021, Shoprite launched a R5 pack of sanitary pads to ease the financial burden of menstrual hygiene and to help keep young girls in school, with zero price increase since on this product to date.

"No one should have to choose between having food to eat and maintaining basic hygiene," explains Renaldo Phillips, General Manager for Private Label and Imports at the Shoprite Group. "Access to hygiene products is not a luxury - it's a fundamental human right. That is why we are committed to developing the best possible products at the lowest possible prices."

According to WHO and UNICEF, hygiene poverty can severely affect health, dignity, and self-esteem. With the rising cost of living, many families are struggling to afford basic necessities, including everyday hygiene and grooming products.

"With our range of R5 toiletries, Shoprite wants to help communities maintain their dignity," says Phillips.

With the exception of sanitary pads, which became VAT exempt on 1 April 2019, all other personal hygiene items including soap, toothpaste and deodorant continue to be taxed at the standard VAT rate. This makes the introduction of Shoprite's R5 toiletries - which helps to bridge the affordability gap for those who need it most - all the more important.

Low price champion

Shoprite continues to work hard to bring some relief to its customers and has slashed the prices of 1 200 products that are now cheaper than last year.

Additionally, Shoprite subsidises over 1.8 million R5 products every week, which are available to customers every single day, at every one of its supermarkets nationwide.

Its growing basket of R5 products now include:

- R5 loaf of 600g brown bread, unchanged in price since April 2016

- R5 takeaway meals, including a protein-rich ox liver burger
- R5 sanitary pads
- R5 shampoo and conditioner
- R5 body wash

“To many, a R5 coin may not seem like much anymore, but it’s important to remember that it can still feed a person and now help to maintain personal hygiene,” concludes Phillips.

“More than just small change, it is a symbol of hope.”

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