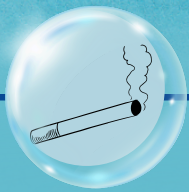


A Small Change for a Big Impact

A small behavioural change can make a significant impact on plastic pollution. You do not need to change everything. If we all take small steps, we can reduce plastic use together. For many of these examples, there are plastic-free alternatives available. The following are sources of plastic you might not have thought of:



Cigarettes

Besides the health impact of smoking, cigarette filters contain plastic and do not biodegrade. People may assume that due to the paper in them, cigarettes are safe to throw away in gutters or parks. However, an estimated 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are thrown away each year, with many of these are washed away in the rain and ending up in the ocean. These plastic butts, which eventually break down into microplastics, also leach nicotine and toxic chemicals into the water.



Chewing Gum

Chewing gum can be made with natural products from plants; however, since the mid-20th century, polyethene and other plastic polymers have been the most common form of gum base. In each piece of chewing gum, there are a variety of plastics that are not biodegradable and pollute the environment. Not only does discarded gum cost money to clean up, but there are not many solutions to the plastic waste produced. Consider buying a plant-based chewing gum, to reduce your plastic pollution.



Clothing

Polyester and nylon account for 69% of all materials in clothing today. During washing, microplastics are released and enter the water system. Research shows that about 1,900 individual fibres can be rinsed off one synthetic garment each wash. Multiple solutions exist, from buying clothing made of natural fibres such as cotton, wool, and linen, to washing clothes less often or fitting a washing machine filter, which can catch some of the microplastics. Recent studies have shown that people wash clothes more than is necessary, which washes them out and produces unnecessary plastic waste.



Drink Cans and Tin Cans

While most food and drink cans are made of aluminium, many contain an epoxy lining, which is not biodegradable and can even be toxic in large quantities. Bisphenol-A is one of the most common epoxy linings in cans, which has been linked to a variety of health risks. Reducing the number of cans you consume can help reduce your plastic waste.



Glitter

Glitter is entirely made up of microplastics. Glitter famously gets everywhere, and much of it enters the environment. It can be extremely hard to clean completely and glitter is also used on a variety of other products, which means they cannot be recycled. Many degradable glitters are now available, which are made of natural materials and do break down in the environment, but most glitter used today is still entirely unrecyclable plastic.



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