

Are You a Part of the Problem, or the Solution?

By Grace MacGillivray

Plastics in the ocean are affecting marine life and ocean plants more than ever before. Since the mid-1900s, plastic production has grown at a rapid pace, and along with the production of plastic, comes plastic pollution. According to the NYT, “The pollution is worse near urban areas, but it is global and has increased by more than 450 percent since the 1960s.” Microfibers, small plastic fibers that cannot be seen with the human eye, account for almost 35% of microplastics in the ocean. These little plastics can be released easily by simple actions, like washing your clothes. Almost 700,000 microfibers can be released in just one load of laundry!

These microscopic fibers can be seen by small fish and water animals as food. Marine life ends up eating the plastics; some get caught and end up on our plates for dinner. While plastics that enter the food chain may end up in our food, many of the animals that eat the plastics don't survive. One Green Planet notes that “When fish consume these plastics they can build up inside of their GI tracts and cause physical harm to the fish.” Microplastics harm fish, sea animals, and even humans.

Some people may say that plastic pollution isn't that big of a problem or that it's a “hoax,” but clearly, they don't tell the truth about what's happening. The ocean levels are rising, sea mammals are dying, plastic is ending up in the food chain, and people in power aren't making any changes. By 2050, if we don't make any changes, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Yes, you read that correctly.

You may be asking, what can I, one person do to help this pressing issue? You can do so much to help the planet. Many of you likely know that eliminating plastic bottles and caps from your life would make a huge difference. If enough people stop buying plastic bottles, the largest plastic bottle producing company, Coca-Cola, will see that people don't want that kind of bottle anymore. Boycott businesses that produce large amounts of plastic. Another high-impact and lesser-known action you can take is to stop buying new clothing that have microfibers in them. Avoid synthetic fabrics such as nylon, polyester, rayon, acrylic, and spandex. Make a pledge to purchase clothing and textiles that are made out of organic fibers like wool, cotton, bamboo, or linen. You may pay more for these natural fabrics and yet, the cost of not buying them is already much too high. We need our oceans to live and they need us to live much more wisely.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/opinion/sunday/what-comes-out-in-the-wash.html>

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