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Simple Ways to Reduce Microplastic Exposure



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Plastic is a petrochemical-based, non-biodegradable pollution nightmare. As discarded water bottles and shampoo containers pile up for hundreds of years in landfills, we continue to produce more and more of the stuff. Meanwhile, plastic breaks down into microparticles that contaminate waterways, air, soil and even snow. They show up in foods and beverages we consume. While more research is needed to understand the human health impacts of microplastics, here are some ways to avoid ingesting these tiny particles.

DON'T DRINK PLASTIC-BOTTLED WATER Plastic-bottled water has approximately double the microplastics of tap water, studies have found. Ditch single-use, plastic-bottled water. Instead, fill reusable stainless steel or glass containers with filtered tap water, chill and enjoy. Filtering tap water can help improve the taste and reduce other undesirable elements, and most carbon block filters with a micron rating of two or less will remove microplastics.

AVOID BEAUTY PRODUCTS WITH MICROBEADS To reduce exposure to microplastics and dissuade manufacturers from using plastic, avoid any beauty products with microbeads, including certain toothpastes and facial scrubs. Some words on product labels that indicate microbeads are polypropylene, polyethylene and polylactic acid (PLA).

WEAR NATURAL, NON-SYNTHETIC FABRICS Synthetic fabrics shed microplastic fibers in the wash and as we wear them. Clothing made with natural fibers such as cotton is preferable.

WASH AND DRY SYNTHETIC CLOTHES DIFFERENTLY When we wash and dry synthetic fabrics, significant levels of microplastics are released into the environment. To lessen this effect, air dry clothes or decrease their time in the dryer. Products are emerging to help filter and collect small synthetic fibers before they wash down the drain and into our waterways or get released into the air. Among the most promising are a washing bag (GuppyFriend.us), laundry ball (CoraBall.com) and in-machine filtration devices (XerosTech.com).

REDUCE MEAT AND FISH CONSUMPTION As microplastics proliferate and marine and land animals eat them, they are finding their way into our food supply. We can limit our exposure by eating less meat and fish.

VACUUM AND DUST REGULARLY Our homes are filled with microplastics. Regularly dusting surfaces and vacuuming with a HEPA filter that traps dust is a great way to reduce these particles in the indoor air environment.

DRIVE LESS As we drive our cars, microplastic flies off the tires and becomes airborne pollution. Find ways to drive less; opt instead for carpooling or public transportation.