

Plastic

What action can you take to protect the environment and your family?

Plastics affect us all. We have been using plastics in quantity for over 70 years now. They break down only very slowly – into micro and nano plastics

which then recirculate through our drinking water and food. Their remnants are found everywhere – in the deepest ocean trenches, on the top of Everest, in the Arctic and Antarctic, in birds, fish and animals – and most disturbingly in all our bodies, including in new-born babies.

Our health. Research has not yet established what damage plastics in our bodies can do to our health, but in fish and animals it has been shown to cause problems for breeding and deterioration in health leading to disease and early death

Recycling plastic is not the answer – worldwide less than 10% of plastic is recycled. In the UK we do manage to recycle about 15%, but both here and across the world most plastic is dumped in landfill, rivers and seas or is burnt – so it stays and recirculates in water, soil and air pollution as very small particles. When plastic is recycled it degrades, which means there are limits to how many times it can be recycled, and that virgin plastic made from oil needs to be constantly added back to maintain the plastic in use.

What can we do? You cannot avoid all plastic, but you can reduce its use as much as you can. These leaflets by Abingdon Cuts Plastic (part of Abingdon Carbon Cutters) will show you how. You can:

- **Refuse** to buy products wrapped in plastics, and buy alternatives
- **Refill** existing glass or plastic containers with loose produce or liquids
- **Carry** shopping bags with you rather than using plastic carrier bags
- **Use a (metal) refill water bottle**- there is a water fountain in Abingdon near the Council offices and many cafes and shops will refill your water bottle for free-see the Refill app at <https://www.citytosea.org.uk/campaign/refill/>
- **Take a refill coffee cup**- many shops give a discount for refills, such as Greggs.

Useful Websites

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/plastics>

<https://www.sas.org.uk/plastic-pollution/>



Avoiding Plastics in theKitchen

Food – do not cook or store in plastic since plastic passes into foods this way, particularly if you use plastic containers in your microwave (use glass suitable for microwaving instead)



Tea Bags may contain up to 25% plastic - use plastic-free tea bags or loose tea with strainer

Have your milk delivered to your door by the milkman, so that bottles can be returned on your doorstep

Fruit and veg boxes can also be delivered, and the packaging will be plastic free (you can choose this) and reusable packaging returned for collection. Companies such as Riverford, Abel and Cole and locally Sandy Lane Farm and Tolhurst Organics do this

Clingfilm is to be avoided. It cannot be recycled and can pass plastic into food. Use non-plastic containers or bees waxed cloth (e.g. for cheese) instead

Cleaning – for cleaning products use refills for existing bottles. Products such as washing up liquid, laundry liquid, toilet cleaner, white vinegar etc are readily available as refills. Refill stations are at Oxford Wood Recycling -off Drayton Rd.

Bicarbonate of soda, citric acid and liquid castile soap are good cleaning products as an alternative to harsh chemicals. They are available at the zero waste shops such as 'Going Green' in Wantage, 'Flo's' in Florence Park, Oxford, Covered market, Oxford or 'Tribe Zero' in Faringdon (deliveries by EV fortnightly to Abingdon)

Dishcloths – use cotton cloths or waste material rather than plastic sponges. Refill shops also sell products made from e.g. bamboo or coconut fibres

Useful websites –

<https://www.greatbritishfoodawards.com/best-british-food-and-drink/how-to-reduce-plastic-waste-in-the-kitchen>

<https://livinator.com/how-to-reduce-plastic-use-in-the-kitchen-sustainable-strategies/>

<https://www.sustainablylazy.com/blog/plastic-free-kitchen>

<https://www.housedigest.com/1756521/get-rid-of-plastic-kitchen-items-utensils-safe-alternatives/>

Avoiding Plastics in theBathroom

Soap. Use tablet soap or liquid soap from refill shops

Toothpaste is available as paste in jars or you can buy chewable toothpaste tablets – from Waitrose, from local refill shops or online

Toothbrushes are available in alternatives to plastic, such as bamboo – or just replace the head and keep the stem by buying one with a head replacement system



Toilet rolls choose those wrapped in paper rather than plastic e.g. Serious tissues/Sainsburys own/Who gives a crap.

Shampoo and Bath Liquid are both available as refills, or use shampoo bars

Shaving. If you prefer manual shaving to electric razors then products such as shaving soap and razors are available plastic free from brands such as Bulldog (available at Waitrose)

Cleaning. Avoid cleaning the loo with bleach. Use toilet cleaner from refills shops or products such as citric acid, available from B&Q in cardboard boxes or zero waste stores.

Cosmetics- moisturiser in metal tin by Dr.Organics (on line) Suncream in metal tin- ‘Shade’ from zero waste shops. Zero waste make up sets available on Etsy website.

Wipes- avoid using these! Keep a wet flannel handy for kids sticky fingers/try reusable make up wipes (zero waste shops).

Period product alternatives- choose natural organic cotton products in cardboard boxes, such as Natracare or washable pads/pants- try ‘Peace with the wild’ website for a wide range of sustainable menstrual products.

Useful websites –

<https://bowercollective.com/blogs/news/10-simple-eco-swaps-for-a-plastic-waste-free-bathroom>

<https://littlegreenspace.org.uk/features/Plastic-free-bathrooms.html>

<https://www.sustainablylazy.com/blog/plastic-free-bathroom-swaps>

Avoiding Plastics in theGarden

Plant pots and trays. Re-use any plastic pots you already have and avoid buying any more plastic pots by using alternatives such as:



- Clay/terracotta or fibre or coir plant pots
- Peat blocks – make your own using a blocking device
- Paper pots – use old newspapers around a ‘form’ such as a tin, or buy a paper –pot making kit
<https://www.edenproject.com/learn/for-everyone/make-your-own-newspaper-seed-pots>
- Tins or plastic yoghurt pots or other such containers – use drainage holes
- Pots made from recycled or fully biodegradable material
- **Use wooden seed trays**
- **Recycle any you throw out.** VWHDC do not recycle plant pots (put them in your Grey bin and they will be incinerated). Waterperry Garden Centre recycles them, or you can take them to OCC recycling centres and put them in the plastics recycling.

Plant labels and twine. Re-use any plastic labels you already have by cleaning them each year. Use wooden sticks (such as old lolly sticks) or other homemade labels you can write on instead of buying more plastic plant labels. Use string or pure wool in place of plastic wire

Compost always comes in plastic bags, so make your own compost if you can by home composting kitchen and garden waste (don’t compost any cooked food, meat, fish or bones - put those in your kitchen caddy for VWHDC to collect kerbside). Re-use any compost bags to as grow bags for potatoes and other such crops or take them to Blue Diamond Garden Centres for recycling

Grow your own! Supermarket fruit and veg wrapped in plastic can be avoided if you grow your own! Use your garden, or apply for an allotment – or join an allotment gardening group such as the one which meets weekly at Peachcroft Farm, Abingdon email: bridgetgyoveg@hotmail.com

Useful websites:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/about-the-rhs/Articles/plastic-policy>

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/plastics/plasticfree-green-gardening-tips-tvs-aly-fowler>

<https://www.burgonandball.com/blogs/news/the-trend-for-plastic-free-gardening>

Avoiding Plastics inYour Wardrobe

Clothing made from synthetic fibres contains plastics in some form. When these clothes are washed they shed fibres into the water which then drains into our rivers and seas



Natural fibres are a better option – cotton, wool or bamboo, for instance. These are not without their environmental issues, since they are often produced using a lot of water and chemicals. Certified organic cotton reduces these problems. Try companies such as BAM (bamboo) or Rapanui, where you can return cotton items to be recycled into new garments. Patchamama have a range of pure woollen items and plastic free wool felt slippers.

Second Hand clothing from charity shops or clothes swaps - or online - is worth considering since you can pick up good quality clothing at low prices. For school clothing see if your children's school has uniform or sports clothing on offer.

The most sustainable clothes are the ones you already have. Think carefully before you buy anything new ...

Laundry. Washing at low temperatures reduces the shedding of fibres. Don't wash your clothes too often – you could just air them instead. You can capture fibres from your washing machine in a filter system (e.g. use a Guppy Bag or a Cora Ball) and then dispose of them in your grey bin, where they will be incinerated (do this when you empty your drier filter or vacuum too!). When buying a new washing machine look out for machines with built in filters which capture small plastic and other fibres

Useful websites:

<https://goodmakertales.com/how-to-avoid-microplastics-in-clothing/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/oliviapinnock/2024/10/21/the-plastic-pollution-hiding-in-your-wardrobe-and-how-to-tackle-it/>

<https://www.sustainablerookie.com/fashion/your-clothes-are-made-of-plastic>

Reduce Your Use of Plastics - Ten things YOU can do:

1. **CLEANING PRODUCTS** - refill your washing up/laundry liquid/fabric softener bottles at certain shops e.g. SESI products at Oxford Wood Recycling centre- Drayton Rd.
2. **PLASTIC BAGS** -Always carry a re-usable shopping bag - and refuse any plastic bag you are offered.
3. **FRUIT & VEG** -Buy your fruit and veg loose -not wrapped in plastic or in polystyrene trays. Or Grow Your Own!
4. **MEAT/ CHEESE/ FISH** -Carry clean re-usable containers if you buy these - ask the retailer to use them instead of plastic wrapping. (Waitrose and Q Gardens farm shop)
5. **CLOTHING** - Synthetics give off plastic micro-fibres in the wash - Wash at low temperatures (30 degrees) and buy natural fibres – cotton, pure wool, bamboo, etc.
6. **REFILL** your coffee or water by carrying a re-usable container.
7. **TOILETRIES** - Use toothpaste in jars or toothpaste tablets (zero waste shops). Use tablet soap and shampoo bars or refill your liquid soap container.
8. **TEA BAGS** - normal ones contain 25% plastic - So look out for plastic-free tea bags in plastic free boxes or use loose tea.
9. **FOOD STORAGE/ LUNCHES** -Don't use cling film! - Use containers in the fridge and for packed lunches. **THE LAST STRAW!** -Only use paper straws – or drink from your glass!
10. **COTTON BUDS** - Buy only paper cotton wool buds.



RECYCLING

If you wish to check what you can recycle, when and how, look at the VWHDC Council's website or download their BinZone App to your mobile phone

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/recycling/what-can-i-recycle>