

## Mother Earth Is Asking Us For Help!

### Learn about the Life Cycle of Plastics and Begin Breaking Free from Plastic

#### What's the Issue?

Despite eight million metric tons of plastic entering Earth's oceans every year, up until recently little has been known about the full impact of plastic pollution. A study released in February 2019, aims to change that. The study, *Plastic & Health: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet*, looks at health impacts of every stage of plastic's life cycle.

- ❖ **Extraction and Transport of Fossil Feedstocks for Plastic** – Extraction releases toxic chemicals into the air and water. The 170 chemicals used in fracking cause health problems.
- ❖ **Refining and Production of Plastic Resins and Additives** – Refining fossil fuels into plastic resin releases toxic chemicals that can cause cancer and nervous system damage.
- ❖ **Consumer Products and Packaging** – Plastic products can harm users as micro plastics can break off and chemicals in the product can cause cancer as well as developmental and hormonal issues.
- ❖ **Toxic Releases from Plastic Waste Management** – Incineration and gasification to eliminate plastic release gases, organic substances, and toxic metals into air, soil, and water.
- ❖ **Fragmenting and Micro plastics** – Plastics breaking down release tiny fragments that people can swallow or inhale causing inflammation, genotoxicity, oxidative stress, and more.
- ❖ **Cascading Exposure as Plastic Degrades** – Chemicals added to plastics spread into the environment posing an ever increasing risk to water, soil, or body tissue where plastic is present.
- ❖ **Ongoing Environmental Exposure** – Degrading plastic on land or in the ocean builds up in the food chain as it is ingested by larger and larger animals.

**The conclusion: Plastic is lethal.** Oceana chief policy officer, Jacqueline Savitz, said in a statement: “We need to take responsibility for plastic's effects on our health and on the environment, stop wasting time with false solutions, and turn to sustainable alternatives to plastic before it's too late.”

#### Acting on our Corporate Stand, What Can We Do to Help?

Aware of all we have been learning about plastics and their harmful effects to people, the planet, and all creation, we can choose from the following suggestions—even if just one at a time. We'll help Mother Earth and feel good about doing something. Then we might want to choose another.



- ❖ Commit to reducing your own use of plastics by using a stainless steel water bottle and tap water instead of purchasing bottled water.
- ❖ Use glass food-storage containers to replace plastic ones.
- ❖ Carry reusable shopping bags whenever shopping and decline an offered plastic bag.
- ❖ Return any plastic bags you acquire to grocery stores to be recycled.
- ❖ Use bars of soap instead of hand soap in plastic bottles.
- ❖ Reduce or eliminate use of the many sizes and types of plastic storage bags.
- ❖ Check out one of these lists of plastic-free suggestions:
  - <https://myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide/> (100 suggestions)
  - <http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org/nationalgreenweeksub/waste-reduction-tips/tips-to-use-less-plastic.html> (17 suggestions)
  - <https://happyhealthymama.com/25-ways-to-use-less-plastic.html> (10 suggestions)