

Worries about microplastics in our seafood

26th January, 2017



People who eat seafood may be also eating tiny pieces of plastic. The small pieces of plastic are called microplastics. They are tiny pieces of plastic from the waste and garbage

that are in the seas and oceans. They are usually less than a millimeter wide. They are becoming more and more common in seafood such as oysters and mussels as well as other kinds of shellfish. Scientists say there are more than five trillion pieces of microplastic in our oceans. More and more are being added every day. Professor Richard Thompson, a marine biologist at Exeter University, said: "Hundreds of marine organisms encounter plastic at the sea surface or in the water...and many of those encounters are harmful if not fatal."

Researchers from the University of Ghent in Belgium conducted a study into microplastics and marine life. They believe people eat up to 11,000 pieces of plastic in their food each year. The researchers said that only around 60 of these pieces stay in our body and the rest will disappear down the toilet. Sixty pieces of microplastic may not seem a lot but it will build up over time. They could eventually be bad for our health. Things are likely to get worse. The researchers added that by the end of the century, seafood eaters could consume as many as 780,000 pieces of plastic a year. That is likely to cause many health problems. Scientists say we need to recycle more and find alternatives to plastic.

Sources:
sky.com / independent.co.uk / cambridgenetwork.co.uk

Writing

We should stop using plastic immediately. Do you agree? What could we use instead?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

seafood / plastic / waste / garbage / oceans / oysters / scientists / marine / biologist / study / researchers / health / disappear / century / problems / recycle / alternatives

True / False

- The article says shellfish love eating tiny pieces of plastic. T / F
- Microplastics are all less than 0.1mm wide. T / F
- Microplastics are becoming more common in oysters and mussels. T / F
- A marine biologist said microplastics do not harm or kill sea life. T / F
- The research was conducted by a university in Malaysia. T / F
- Researchers say people eat up to 11,000 pieces of microplastic a year. T / F
- By 2099, seafood eaters could be eating 780,000 bits of plastic a year. T / F
- Scientists say we need to find alternatives to plastic. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. tiny | a. remainder |
| 2. pieces | b. trash |
| 3. garbage | c. eat |
| 4. such as | d. come across |
| 5. encounter | e. minute |
| 6. conducted | f. substitutes |
| 7. rest | g. did |
| 8. eventually | h. bits |
| 9. consume | i. in the end |
| 10. alternatives | j. like |

Discussion – Student A

- What does a marine biologist do every day?
- What are microplastics?
- Is eating seafood riskier than eating meat?
- What do you think of oysters?
- Whose responsibility is it to protect our oceans?
- How can we keep our food safe?
- What health problems do you think microplastics could cause?
- What questions would you like to ask the scientists?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. waste and | a. of the century |
| 2. more and more common in seafood | b. if not fatal |
| 3. More and more are being | c. to get worse |
| 4. at the sea surface or | d. to plastic |
| 5. many of those encounters are harmful | e. garbage |
| 6. the rest will disappear down | f. added every day |
| 7. Things are likely | g. many health problems |
| 8. by the end | h. in the water |
| 9. likely to cause | i. the toilet |
| 10. recycle more and find alternatives | j. such as oysters |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What seafood is the best, and why?
- How can we clean all plastic from the oceans?
- What can we use instead of plastic?
- What do you think of seafood?
- Do you worry about what you eat?
- Should shops stop selling seafood if it has microplastics?
- What do you do to recycle plastic?

Spelling

- tiny eiespc of plastic
- from the waste and aebagrg
- becoming more and more mconom
- in our eaonsc
- a mnraei biologist
- harmful if not lataf
- cdtnuocde a study
- adpiserap down the toilet
- They could nyetlvlaeu be bad
- by the end of the cetyrun
- we need to ereccyl more
- find naraetvetlis to plastic

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. b	4. j	5. d
6. g	7. a	8. i	9. c	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Plastic Bottles

You think plastic bottles are the most important things to recycle. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what problems there are with recycling their things. Also, tell the others which of these is the least important to recycle (and why): computers, clothes or cars.

Role B – Computers

You think computers are the most important things to recycle. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what problems there are with recycling their things. Also, tell the others which of these is the least important to recycle (and why): plastic bottles, clothes or cars.

Role C – Clothes

You think clothes are the most important things to recycle. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what problems there are with recycling their things. Also, tell the others which of these is the least important to recycle (and why): computers, plastic bottles or cars.

Role D – Cars

You think cars are the most important things to recycle. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what problems there are with recycling their things. Also, tell the others which of these is the least important to recycle (and why): computers, clothes or plastic bottles.

Speaking – Recycle

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important things to recycle at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| • cars | • plastic bottles |
| • clothes | • books |
| • mobile phones | • computers |
| • cups and plates | • furniture |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.