

Problem Card 8: Microthread Pollution

What type of plastic is most commonly found in our oceans? Plastic bags? Plastic wrappers? Guess again. You are wearing it.

Over 60% of the plastic debris found in the marine environment are from microfibrils from our clothing. 3/4 of all clothes produced contain synthetic (man made) fibres such as polyester, Lycra, nylon etc...otherwise known as plastics.

This global issue has increased by over 450% since the 1960s. Scientists have discovered plastic waste from microfibrils is six times greater than the plastic from other sources, like bottles, bags and wrappers.



How does what we wear affect aquatic life?

As we shed skin and hair, our clothing fabrics also shed fibres. When we so innocently place our dirty laundry into our washing machines, tiny synthetic fibres from our clothing begin a journey themselves.

The waste water from our washing machine carries these microscopic fibres straight through washing machine filters and past sewerage system filters on the way to rivers, lakes and oceans.

Plastics are entering the world's oceans at an alarming rate. It is estimated that there are at least five trillion plastic pieces on the surface of the oceans with eight million tonnes of plastics leaking into the ocean every day—that is the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic every minute of every day of the year.

Scientists have looked inside the stomachs of different fish from lakes and oceans around the world and have found plastic in 1 out of every 4!



For more information on the microfibre issue and ideas, check out the website!

How could we prevent microthreads from polluting the environment ?

Can clothing manufacturers help solve the problem with what materials they use to make clothing?

Can synthetic materials be changed to stop them shedding microthreads?

How could washing machine manufactures help solve this problem?

Is there something Governments and councils could do to protect our oceans from these tiny fibres getting through our sewage system?

Who would benefit and who's responsibility is it anyway?



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