

GENERATION PLASTIC

Unpacking the impact of plastic on children

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for every child

TIPS FOR FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS

The best way to protect children from the harms of plastic is by prevention of exposures through use minimization, ambitious regulation, international cooperation and rigorous clean-up. The following tips for families are meant to empower individuals but are in no way replacements for global policy and large-scale investment in protecting children's environmental health.

Tips to reduce children's exposure to plastics

By adopting these practices, families can reduce children's exposure to harmful chemicals and microplastics, promoting a safer and healthier environment.

- 1. Discourage waste burning:** Advocate for no-burn practices in your community and avoid burning plastic waste, which releases toxic chemicals harmful to air quality and health.
- 2. Reduce plastic use in children's spaces:** Minimize plastic-based materials such as PVC flooring in areas where children sleep and play. Avoid upholstered furniture with flame retardants or other plastic-based coatings in children's rooms. Opt for safer, non-plastic alternatives like wood, linoleum, natural fibres or other eco-friendly materials.
- 3. Limit canned foods and drinks and ultra-processed food:** Avoid canned foods and beverages, which often have plastic linings. Particularly for pregnant women and children, limit ultra-processed foods, which have been linked to higher levels of plastic-associated chemicals.
- 4. Utilize safe food storage practices:** Use non-plastic storage options like glass, stainless steel or textile, and replace plastic wraps with eco-friendly alternatives.
- 5. Avoid heating or freezing plastic:** Avoid microwaving, sterilizing, freezing, or putting plastics in hot water. These actions can accelerate the release of harmful microplastics and chemicals, posing risks, especially to pregnant women and young children. Use glass or stainless steel when possible.
- 6. Choose safe toys:** Select toys made from non-toxic, sustainable materials, avoiding those with toxic plastic components or chemical coatings.
- 7. Opt for safer baby products:** Choose baby food packaged in glass or metal containers and consider using glass or stainless steel baby bottles. Explore cloth diaper options instead of standard disposable ones.
- 8. Avoid plastic in cosmetics and clothing:** Refrain from using cosmetics for children, especially those containing glitter or microbeads. Buy fewer new clothes, use them for longer, and avoid synthetic, plastic-based materials.
- 9. Control dust indoors:** Wet-clean or vacuum regularly to reduce dust, which often contains microplastics. Remove outdoor shoes before entering your home to minimize indoor contamination.
- 10. Ensure proper ventilation:** Ventilate rooms frequently to lower the concentration of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) emitted by plastic materials and other indoor sources.
- 11. Check product safety:** Review toxicity information and labels for items you purchase, especially for children. Look for independent certifications that indicate low chemical content or plastic-free construction.
- 12. Washing:** Wash children's hands, especially before eating and drinking, to reduce unintentional ingestion of plastic particles and chemicals.

Tips to reduce the plastic burden on the planet

By adopting these habits, families can significantly reduce their plastic footprint and contribute to a healthier planet for future generations.

- 1. Be a role model:** Carry reusable shopping bags, water bottles and containers to reduce reliance on single-use plastics.
- 2. Avoid single-use plastics at home:** Eliminate disposable cutlery, straws, plates and cups by opting for reusable alternatives.
- 3. Choose sustainable packaging:** Avoid single-use sachets and opt for products with recyclable or refillable packaging to minimize waste. Purchase items in bulk when possible.
- 4. Practice waste segregation:** Properly sort recyclable, biodegradable and non-recyclable waste to ensure effective disposal.
- 5. Repair and reuse:** Fix broken items instead of discarding them.
- 6. Support plastic-reduction policies:** Advocate for and support local, school and community policies that limit the use of unnecessary or harmful plastics.
- 7. Stay informed and engaged:** Learn about local laws and regulations on plastic use and disposal, and support leaders and initiatives promoting sustainable practices.
- 8. Educate and involve children:** Teach children about zero-waste approaches and the impact of plastic pollution.
- 9. Lead community efforts:** Participate in or organize local clean-up drives, plastic-free campaigns or educational workshops to inspire collective action.

