

Environmentally Inclined

Research has shown that there is about 8 million tons of plastic in the oceans; that's enough to cover every foot of coastline in the world. This plastic gets deep into the ocean where the sea animals think of it as food. Plastic then gets clogged inside the poor animal's body, since they're unable to digest it. All the plastic in their stomach doesn't allow food to enter causing the animal to die of starvation.

People know the effects of plastic pollution such as upsetting the food chain, groundwater, air and land pollution, but they still don't choose to help the community. Why is that? Well, it's like that because plastic has become so convenient. It's a one time use and after throwing it away, people don't care. But they should care, we should all care. If we use the Earth's resources, we also must renew it, instead of polluting the Earth.

People say that recycling is the solution to plastic pollution, but recycling just turns the same plastic into a different plastic product. Plastic is a type of poison. It's practically impossible to get rid of it. Burning it is incredibly toxic and can lead to harmful conditions and deadly illnesses. Burning plastic is not highly ideal. Now, what if I told you that it's not just our marine life, but **we** are also consuming plastic?

A research shows that about 500 food items contain a plastic additive used in yoga mats and flip flops. The chemical is a dough conditioner which makes products puffier and able to withstand shipping. Since plastic is convenient, food is also warmed up in plastic containers. Small amounts of plastic slowly melt into our food. That amount increases when plastic touches fatty, salty or acidic foods. This process is called leaching or migrating.

Plastic food is also a huge concern for our environment. For the past year, there have been reports of plastic rice being produced, and people are actually consuming it. It's entirely made of plastic and the only way to tell apart plastic rice from real rice is when it boils. As the water boils, the plastic rice will float to the top. Plastic is starting to consume us, take over our life and we need some solutions for it.

There are solutions that require the whole world to work together, such as skimming the plastic out of the ocean, but these strategies only work when we prevent plastic pollution in the first place. Some solutions to plastic pollution include to shop friendly. Instead of using plastic bags people can use reusable bags; it's healthy for the environment and the economy. It would also be helpful to buy products with less plastic packaging.

Another solution could be to get rid of plastic bottled water. We, as a community can ensure that there are water fountains everywhere with clean water. Using steel bottles will aid with that too. Every city can also take the initiative to educate businesses. Showing them how to package using environmentally friendly items, can ease the process of renewing the environment. If we explained the long-term effects on Earth in detail to these organizations, it might change their thought process and bring a positive change. Checking restaurant food monthly to ensure that there are no plastic additives can also be done. The community needs to be driven and have the motivation for creating change.

One ultimate solution can be to just simply ban plastic. Yes, it's a wild thought but if it's best for the planet, why not? If after the ban, a company continues to produce plastic products, they should be heavily fined. The easiest solution is to get involved and take initiative. Small efforts make a huge impact. People can help pick up litter, especially on the coast or go and remove invasive plants. The biggest help can be to educate. Educating the youth on how to simply just rebuild a trail or plant seeds properly, can help in the long term.

We're all in this together. Change starts with an initiative and a motive to be passionate about what you love. If we can all change our thoughts, person by person, city by city, eventually the whole world can work on broader solutions.

By: Samriddhi Singh