



Help us End Plastic Soup



What's the problem?

Microplastics are plastic particles smaller than 5mm. A major source of microplastic pollution is from synthetic fibres which are shed from clothing when washed. As they are too small to be caught by washing machine filters and the sewage system, they end up in the sea and wider environment.

Due to their small size the fibres can be ingested by aquatic life, posing a health risk to them. Microplastics are also entering the food chain, the long-term effects of which are unknown.

What is the Women's Institute calling for?

The WI launched the End Plastic Soup campaign following overwhelming support from delegates at the 2017 Annual Meeting. The campaign calls on Government and industry to develop innovative solutions to the issue.

In order to develop solutions to the issue, we need to gain a better understanding of the long-term impact of microplastic fibres on the marine environment and humans, and understand why different textiles shed varying amounts of fibres when washed.

How can you help?

Holding End Plastic Soup Awareness meetings/events is an important step to encourage your community to take action and to promote the campaign. Consumers can make a difference by altering clothes purchasing and washing habits. The checklist on the other side of this leaflet outlines ways in which you can make a difference in your own home.

For further ways to get involved with the campaign and to download our action pack, please visit: thewi.org.uk/endplasticsoup



Change your own clothes purchasing and washing habits

Wash well

The EU Mermaids LIFE + Project have developed a range of actions that you can take to reduce the release of fibres from washing clothes.

Wash less – only wash clothes when they need it. Items that are not worn close to the skin often do not need washing after just one wear. This will also prolong the life of your clothes.

Fill up your washing machine to the max: washing a full load results in less friction between the clothes.

Wash at a low temperature. This not only helps to reduce microplastic fibre release, but also helps to reduce CO2 emissions!

When cleaning the dryer, do not flush the lint down the drain, throw it in the bin.

Avoid long washing cycles as long periods of washing can cause more friction between fabrics.

Wear well – shop smarter and buy less

'Fast fashion' can result in more harmful effects than just cluttering your wardrobe! It can have negative impacts for people and the planet, so it's important to upcycle and repair your clothes. For tips on how to repair your clothes, visit: thewi.org.uk/s/v9. Before buying a new item of clothing, be picky and ask yourself:

Do you really need it? Don't compromise for designs you don't really like just because they are in style.

Does it fit well?

Does it go with the rest of your wardrobe?

Is it well made? Avoid clothes that do not look like they will wear and wash well.

Did you know?

Wet wipes and baby wipes also contain synthetic fibres. They are often mistakenly flushed down the toilet which then cause blocked drains and harm to the environment. Even if the pack says 'flushable', throw it in the bin instead!

