Plastic

Can you name your plastics?

#1 Plastics: Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET or PETE)

Common uses: 2-liter soda bottles, single-use water bottles, cooking oil bottles, peanut butter jars, etc. Commonly considered safe. Some studies, such as those published in Environmental Health Perspectives, argue that PET has been shown to leach endocrine disruptors into contents under some conditions during common use, such as use during prolonged high temperature.

#2 Plastics: High Density Polyethylene (HDPE)

Common uses: detergent bottles, yoghurt tubs, milk jugs, bottle caps, backpack frames, hard hats, hula hoops, etc. HDPE is a sturdy and reliable non-leaching translucent plastic; it's a stiffer and "milkier," non-translucent plastic. HDPE resists UV penetration, which can damage and discolour other plastics. Dishwasher-safe and able to withstand temperatures from -100 to 80° C, it's ideal for beverage and food storage containers**.**

#3 Plastics: Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)

Common uses: plastic pipes, Saran wraps, outdoor furniture, flooring, siding, etc. According to the American Environmental Protection Agency and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, vinyl chloride, vinyl products and polyvinyl chloride plastic is classified as a human carcinogen. Acute exposure to higher levels of PVC through inhalation has been shown to result in a variety of effects on the central nervous system, such as dizziness, headaches, giddiness and drowsiness. For this reason, products made from PVC should not be used for food storage.

#4 Plastics: Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE)

Common uses: plastic film, grocery bags, dry cleaning bags, produce bags, trash can liners, food storage containers. According to the British Plastics Federation, LDPE plastic is highly resistant to breakdown due to chemicals from acid, oils, greases, alcohols and more. Recycling Operators of New Zealand point out that recovered LDPE packaging is capable of being recycled in new products. Most research has not shown leaching of carcinogens or hormone-disrupting chemicals. Flexible, impact-resistant and tough, so it's OK for use with food and beverages.

#5 Plastics: Polypropylene (PP)

Common uses: bottle caps, food containers, drinking straws, etc. Polypropylene is not likely to be a human carcinogen, is not suspected to be an environmental toxin, and not suspected of being bioaccumulative. BPA-free, polypropylene is commonly used for injection moulding. Its durability makes polypropylene plastic a good option for reusable bags and food and beverage storage**.**

Plastic #6: Polystyrene (PS)

Common uses: packaging pellets or "Styrofoam® peanuts," cups, plastic tableware, meat trays, to-go "clam shell" containers. Polystrene, such as urban litter, marine debris, wildlife detriments when ingested and many more. Polystyrene can leach the toxin Styrene when it comes into contact with warm foods or drinks, alcohol, oils and acidic foods—causing human contamination and posing a potential health risk to people who come into contact with it. For these reasons and more, polystyrene should be avoided.

Plastic #7: Other

Common uses: LEXAN, certain kinds of food containers, and Tupperware. This plastic category, as its name of "other" implies, is any plastic other than the named #1-#6 plastic types. These containers can be any of the several different types of plastic polymers.

Cool plastic questions:

(Find the best answer!)
Where is the largest plastic rubbish tip?
Who invented plastic?
What does the work 'plastic' mean?
How does it take plastic to degrade?
Are there 'biodegradable' plastics?

It depends on the kind of plastic, but it can be around 1000 years! And it usually doesn't biodegrade, it just photodegrades into smaller and smaller pieces ☹ This is a great reason to
1/ Reduce plastic use
2/ Reuse plastic for new jobs
3/ Recycle all you can, and
4/ Throw it away responsibly: in the rubbish tip!

It is in the north pacific ocean, and when you fly over it you probably can't see any plastic as it is almost all microscopic pieces. Those little pieces can do enormous environmental damage, however.

It comes from the Greek πλαστικός (*plastikos*) meaning "capable of being shaped or moulded",

Parkesine is generally considered the first man-made plastic (although Bakelite in 1907 was more commercially successful). Parkesine was patented by Alexander Parkes in 1862.

Yup, made from organic and inorganic materials, these plastics will break down into carbon dioxide, water, and other natural inorganic substances, given enough time. However, it is a wise warning that it is a mistake to focus on finding ways to make products easier to throw away in the name of helping the environment!

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