

ZERO WASTE

#BREAKFREEFROMPLASTICS

Plastic Facts

- 10-20 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans each year (roughly the weight of a cruise ship)
- 322 million kilograms of post-consumer plastic packaging were collected in **Canada** for recycling in 2015 alone (roughly the weight of 1,000 airplanes)
- An average person in Canada uses 100 kg of plastic each year
- A plastic bottle requires 25% of its volume in crude oil during the production process
- 20% of Canadian households are using single-serve coffee machines
- 4 million disposable diapers are being discarded in Canada every day



Sometimes it feels that plastic has a stranglehold on us. It is everywhere including places it should not be like in the ocean and in the guts of fish and birds.

Recycling plastic is great but to really change the negative impacts of our plastic consumption avoiding and reducing plastic use is even better.

This guide is meant to help you transition to a more plastic-free lifestyle.

**Have fun creating the Zero Waste lifestyle
you desire!**



Living plastic-free can mean you are not buying any new products that are made from plastics or have plastics in them and you are not buying products packaged in plastic. THAT IS A BIG CHANGE WHEN EVERYTHING FROM FURNITURE TO CLOTHING TO EVERYDAY HOUSEHOLD ITEMS SEEMS TO HAVE PLASTIC IN IT!

But we, each, can start on the path of breaking free from plastic and we can move closer to a plastic-free lifestyle. Instead of purging everything plastic from your home or office, and possibly creating lots of waste, we recommend as things wear out or your budget allows replacing items with more sustainable alternatives or not replacing them if you really don't need that stuff. We want to help you be more conscious of the choices you make when shopping. Mainly we want to help you achieve the goal to have a more plastic-free life.

Set a goal and continue to work on improvement.

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4 Reasons to Break Free From Plastic

Pollution

We are now producing nearly 300 million tons of plastic every year, half of which is for single use. More than 8 million tons of plastic is dumped into our oceans every year.

Health

Manufacturers often add different chemicals to plastics to give them the exact characteristics they're looking for, like flexibility, strength, and reduced production cost. These components can include phthalates, bisphenol A (BPA), polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE) and tetrabromobisphenol A (TBBPA) – all of which alter hormone expression in animals and humans.

Waste

We have developed a “disposable” lifestyle and estimates are that approximately 50% of plastic is used just once and thrown away.

Dependence on Fossil Fuels

Over 99% of plastics are produced from chemicals sourced from fossil fuels. Because plastics production is part of the fossil fuels supply chain, many fossil fuel companies own plastics producers and many plastics companies own fossil fuel operations.

The Rewards for Breaking Free From Plastic

- Being a positive role-model.
- You become part of a global movement.
- You are a defender of the planet
- You improve your health.
- You have less packaging, less garbage and less recycling.
- You become a Zero Waste actionist.

Strategies to Break Free From Plastic

- Changing habits and routines
- Finding alternative products
- Making own alternative products
- Avoiding products, packaging and peer pressure

Getting started

Take a quick inventory and identify which products you buy containing plastic and how long you use them and keep them. Choose the three easiest to replace or avoid.



A plastic bag has an average “working life” of 15 minutes.



Break Free From Plastics Tips to Try

Shopping

- ❑ Bring your own shopping bag, made out of natural materials. Always!
- ❑ Forgo plastic produce bags; instead buy loose veggie and fruit.
- ❑ Shop at bulk food stores, refill stores and farmers' markets to reduce the amount of packaging you purchase. Remember to take your own reusable containers.
- ❑ Buy farm stand eggs in reusable paper containers and return empty container to farmers for reuse.
- ❑ Support coffee shops that use porcelain cups and dishes with your patronage.
- ❑ Refuse perfume samples and cosmetic samples.
- ❑ Resist buying inexpensive plastic toys for children. Borrow toys from a toy library or invest in quality toys.
- ❑ Cut down the purchase of frozen or canned foods, as they are usually packaged extensively.
- ❑ Do not be afraid to ask if you can use your own containers.
- ❑ Take time to read the labels, so you avoid products that contain microbeads.
- ❑ Concentrate shopping at supermarkets on outer aisles to avoid over-packaging.
- ❑ Leave over-packaged items on the shelf.
- ❑ Buy durable products and keep them.
- ❑ Buy less.
- ❑ Shop for products that are made from natural materials.
- ❑ Know the plastics and packaging you can recycle in your local recycling programs.
- ❑ Choose cardboard, glass, or tin over plastic.
- ❑ Avoid sachets of mustard, ketchup, relish, or soy sauce at restaurants and take-out food places. Sachet packaging are normally made of a thin film of plastic and aluminum. Heinz alone sells 11 billion ketchup sachets a year

- ❑ Demand “no straw please” whenever you order drinks at a bar or restaurant or carry a reusable glass or stainless steel straw.
- ❑ When ordering pizza say “no thanks” to plastic separators.
- ❑ Encourage your local beverage establishments to have a no straw policy or at least to switch to paper or stainless steel straws



Packaging is the largest end use market segment accounting for just over 40% of total plastic usage.

At Home

- ❑ Invest in a fountain pen.
- ❑ Carry reusable containers and cups for take-out food.
- ❑ Have a Zero Waste kit in your car, purse or backpack so you always have reusable cutlery, cloth napkins, water bottles, and coffee cups available.
- ❑ Replace plastic dishes with glass, ceramic or stainless steel or bamboo alternatives.
- ❑ Try using cloth diapers instead of disposable ones. For convenience, see if there is a local diaper service near you. More than 4 million disposable diapers are discarded in Canada each day!
- ❑ Avoid Teflon- coated cookware.
- ❑ Switch to reusable beeswax wraps instead of cling wrap.
- ❑ Natural loofahs or scrubbers can replace plastic scrubbers.
- ❑ Borrow, rent or buy from stainless steel cutlery for parties or events. Six million tons of non-durable plastics are discarded every year.
- ❑ Use matches instead of disposable plastic lighters or invest in a refillable metal lighter.
- ❑ Use reusable cloth bags for gift giving.

- ❑ Make ice cubes with stainless steel ice cube trays.
- ❑ Use a blender with a glass container.
- ❑ Compost food scraps and garden waste so you don't need to use plastic garbage bags.
- ❑ If you have garbage, line your garbage bin with newspaper. Alternatively, ditch the garbage bin lining altogether and simply wash the bin after emptying it.
- ❑ When furnishing your home, choose natural fibers and materials that are durable and can be repaired or refurbished.
- ❑ Store food in jars or metal containers.
- ❑ Brew your morning coffee without single-use coffee pods
- ❑ Use paper tape instead of scotch tape for securing packages
- ❑ Use beeswax candles or incense instead air fresheners in plastic containers



Canadians use between 9 and 15 billion plastic bags every year; enough to circle the globe 55 times.

Clothing

- ☐ Buy clothing made of biodegradable and natural fibers.
- ☐ Buy second-hand or organize a clothing swap.
- ☐ Create a capsule wardrobe of natural materials.
- ☐ Use wooden or metal hangers.
- ☐ Store clothing in canvas bags.
- ☐ Ask your dry-cleaner to return your clothes without plastic wrap. Take your own garment bag to keep clothes clean during transport



The world's annual consumption of plastic materials has increased from around 5 million tonnes in 1950 to nearly 297.5 million tonnes today.

Cleaning

- ☐ Buy dishwashing and laundry detergent in bulk or at refill stores.
- ☐ Use a dish brush with a wooden handle and compostable bristles.
- ☐ Use a metal dustpan.
- ☐ Clean surfaces with vinegar and water.
- ☐ Make your own cleaning products.
- ☐ Make your own cotton Swiffer pads.
- ☐ Use natural herbs like lavender instead of buying plastic air fresheners.
- ☐ Repurpose and recycle textiles: Use them for cleaning rags.
- ☐ Use wooden clothes pins.
- ☐ Use wool dryer balls.



Microfibers can be released from any synthetic fabric, including polyester, rayon, and acrylics.

Personal Hygiene

- ☐ Use bar soap or shampoo bars instead of shower gel.
- ☐ Instead of tissues use handkerchieves.
- ☐ Use a wooden hair brush with natural bristles.
- ☐ Switch to bamboo tooth brushes.
- ☐ Try reusable menstrual cups and reusable pads.
- ☐ Make your own toothpaste.
- ☐ When shaving, opt for a reusable razor instead of a disposable one. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2 billion disposable razors are thrown away in the USA each year. Canada probably has a similar total.
- ☐ Swap out your synthetic sponge with a cloth or a real luffa.



Recycled plastics, are mostly turned into lower-value applications that are not again recyclable after use.

Reducing Plastic at Work

- ☐ Use pencils or fountain pen.
- ☐ Avoid using single-use coffee pods. Opt for a French press instead.
- ☐ Recover and reuse binders.
- ☐ Consider using reusable shipping containers.
- ☐ Instead of packing peanuts or bubble wrap use paper.
- ☐ Have a recycling system for products used in your work environment and label these clearly.



One million birds and 100,000 marine mammals are killed annually from plastic in our oceans.

Reducing Plastic at School

- ☐ Make your own glue.
- ☐ Recover and reuse binders.
- ☐ Pack lunches in unbleached wax paper and reusable containers made from stainless steel, ceramic or glass.
- ☐ Use stainless steel water bottles.
- ☐ Encourage your school to install a water bottle refill station.
- ☐ Encourage plastic-free parties and decorations: Avoid plastic streamers, banners and balloons.
- ☐ Organize an equipment, clothing, and school supply swap.
- ☐ Repurpose and recycle crayons.
- ☐ Promote plastic-free and waste-free lunches: Make waste-less lunches using reusable containers instead of individually wrapped convenience food.



Both the production and the disposal of single-use plastics often emit massive amounts of dioxins, a highly toxic byproduct linked to increased cancer rates and other human health effects.

Do it Yourself

[Beeswax wraps](#)

[Binders](#)

[Making cloth gift bag](#)

[Making tote bag from a t-shirt](#)

[Reusing crayons](#)

[Soap](#)

[Toothpaste](#)

Useful Sources

[Bulk Barn](#)

[Burlap Shoe](#)

[Greenmunsh](#)

[MegaVrac](#)

[Nada](#)

[No Plastic](#)

[Nu Grocery](#)

[Saponetti](#)

[Still Eagle](#)

[The Soap Dispensary](#)

[Unpacked Halifax](#)

[West Coast Refill](#)



Made in Canada solutions

[Glass straws](#)

[Glass straws](#)

[Beeswax wraps](#)

[Menstrual pads](#)

[Toothpaste](#)

Thank you for taking time to read this guide.

To find even more ideas how you can reduce plastic, connect with us by [subscribing to our newsletter](#).

You can also [become a member of Zero Waste Canada](#) and help us create a world without waste.

We hope this guide has provided you with the information you need to start living a life with less plastic and join the plastic-free movement.