

# MYTHS ABOUT MICROPLASTICS

## MYTH #1

What's the fuss about microplastics? Do we really need a fancy new term for small pieces of plastic?

**Truth:** Microplastics are not just "small pieces of plastic". They actually can be REALLY small – like, as small as a 1/10 of the width of a hair – so sometimes we can't see them without magnification. Because they are so small, they create different problems than large plastic litter that you see at the beach or along a trail.

microplastic

width of hair

## MYTH #2

The problem with microplastics is the same as the problem with plastics in general. No difference!

**Truth:** Yes and no. Plastics, regardless of the size, are a problem for the environment. But very small pieces of plastic can pose different issues than larger plastics, such as to wildlife if they are ingested, or if chemicals or microbes have latched onto tiny pieces of plastic and then find their ways into food webs.

## MYTH #3

Microplastics are mostly found in the ocean.

**Truth:** Nope. Microplastics have been found in many places, such as in lakes, rivers, soils, and even on snow.

## MYTH #4

Microplastics mainly come from single-use plastics, like bottles, straws, and shopping bags.

**Truth:** They can come from these sources. And they also come from a range of other sources like wastewater treatment, stormwater from roadways, solids waste (biosolid) application to agricultural fields, and other airborne sources. Scientists don't yet know exactly how much microplastics come from each source.

No matter what, reducing litter and single-use plastics is good for the environment, so thank you for continuing this effort!

## MYTH #5

Face washes are the main source of microplastics.

**Truth:** Nope. In December 2015, the United States passed the Microbead-Free Waters Act that will ultimately eliminate the use of microplastic beads in cosmetics.

However, some cosmetics in general can contain synthetic ingredients, so keep an eye out for words like polyethylene, polyamide, or polystyrene in the ingredient list.



## MYTH #6

Since wastewater treatment is a contributor to microplastic pollution, there is nothing I can do about it personally.

**Truth:** There are ways to reduce tiny microplastics that come from synthetic clothing from reaching that wastewater treatment plant in the first place. Here are some options for you: use a Cora Ball or Guppy Bag in the washer cycle; even install a microfiber filter to your washer line; and think before you flush contact lenses and other synthetic goods.

## MYTH #7

We don't have to worry about microplastics in the environment because science hasn't proven them to be a problem.

**Truth:** Remember how science doesn't prove things, it just disproves things? Well, scientists are working very hard on conclusive studies about the impacts that microplastics do and don't have.

Many scientists consider microplastics an emerging contaminant, which means that they have potential adverse effects – but those effects are not well understood. So, a precautionary approach (and one that is warranted by current studies on the problems of microplastics) is to look for ways to mitigate sources of microplastics, continue to investigate their sources, and find win-wins to reduce plastics overall.

