

WHY WE SHOULD USE CLOTH, NOT PLASTIC BAGS

Single-use plastic bags are made from oil and natural gas and end up as waste in landfills or as pollution throughout the earth. Five trillion plastic bags are produced globally each year, and Americans use 100 billion every year. Less than 3% of plastic bags are recycled.

The majority of plastic bags do not decompose within hundreds of years, but they do degrade through physical wear and photolysis (sunlight degrades them). These degradation processes turn plastic bags into smaller and smaller pieces that eventually become microparticles that are transported all over the globe by wind, rain, runoff and ocean currents. These plastic microparticles are mistaken for food by many animals, such as birds, fish and turtles. Ninety percent of all seabirds and 100% of ocean turtles have microplastics in their guts. Humans consume microplastics from food, water and air, and our individual dose equals a credit card each week.

The various plastic polymers used to make bottles, bags and food containers contain toxic chemicals that are proven to cause endocrine disruption and immunosuppression. Other contaminants in water and air, like pesticides and PCBs, are adsorbed by microplastics and transferred to the food chain as animals eat them. In other words, plastic products are contributing to the contamination of ecosystems and humans in numerous ways.

The global plastics industry emits over 200 million tons of greenhouse gases per year, the equivalent of 116 coal-fired power plants. Plastic packaging, including bags, is the largest source of plastics pollution, followed by synthetic clothing (e.g. polyester). Nine billion tons of plastic products have been produced globally since 1950, and 300 million tons are now made each year. Currently, one-half of all plastic products produced are single-use items, and only 9% of all plastics used in the U.S. are recycled.

We can't totally avoid buying single-use plastic products because there are few non-plastic alternatives; however, we can reduce our "plastics footprint" by using cloth shopping bags instead of the disposable plastic ones offered at stores.

We hope that you will be inspired to use the bag that we have provided you.

Sources: Grist: 12/1/21: Sierra Magazine: 3/31/22

Creation Care Ministry