

Why Plastic is Bad?

Manufacture and recycling of plastic, produces many toxic gases. Manufacturing of plastic produces trichloroethane, acetone, methylene chloride, methyl ethyl ketone, styrene, toluene, benzene, sulphur oxides, nitrous oxides, ethylene oxide, methanol and other chemicals [4]. During production of PVC (polyvinyl chloride), also known as vinyl, chemicals such as mercury, lead, dioxins, and phthalates are released. Also, PVC production uses the most significant amount of industrial chlorine.

“Among the 47 chemical plants ranked highest in carcinogenic emissions by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 35 are involved in plastic production.” [4] Those chemicals cause health problems such as cancer, endocrine disruption, reproductive system harm, immune system damage and other risks.

People who work at PVC manufacturing plants or live near those factories have a higher chance of getting testicular cancer, liver cancer and many other health problems.

PVC is used in shower curtains, food packaging, floors, toys, water pipes, computers and many other common household items. Plastic containers can contaminate food with phthalates. Plastic gets into the food and food gets into the plastic [2]. According to EPA (Environmental Protection Authority) shower curtains reduce indoor air quality for a month or longer periods of time after they have been purchased.

Recycling of plastic emits less toxic gases than production of new plastic products. However, it is only possible to recycle plastic only a few times (usually only once) unlike in the case of metal or glass.

Plastic has negative effects on health, economy, environment and society. It's a non-renewable resource that will eventually run out. We need to find alternative materials to replace plastic products. Alternatives to plastic are listed in [3] and [4].

References

- [1] http://www.highcountryconservation.org/toxic_plastics.htm
- [2] <http://www.mindfully.org/Plastic/Plasticizers/Out-Of-Diet-PG5nov03.htm>
- [3] <http://www.mindfully.org/Plastic/Alternatives/Alternatives-Plastic-Goettlich3aug05.htm>
- [4] <http://www.naturallifemagazine.com/0806/asknl.htm>

Dr Mark Glickman, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia