

Main actions

In order to find one or more solutions to this problem, all the parties involved in process of production and distribution of clothing need to take responsibility. For this reason, the Plastic Soup Foundation has launched the Ocean Clean Wash campaign, where NGOs, brands, and scientists have come together to look for solutions.



Plastic Soup Foundation and Parley for the Oceans will launch a worldwide challenge on February 14, 2017, in which we will call for eco-innovations and solutions from universities, innovation centers or individuals to solve this issue.

The solutions may be included in one of these categories:

- * a washing machine filter, synthetic yarns and fabrics that do not release fibers,
- * synthetic yarns and fabrics that do not release plastic fibers during washing,
- * eco-friendly coatings to prevent the release of plastic fibers,
- * eco-friendly washing detergents with the same purpose, and a yet undiscovered innovation beyond imagination.

Thanks to the Mermaids LIFE+ project, we have developed a method that helps us to develop a benchmark to measure the amount of fibers that are released during laundry processes. A benchmark for clothes is a strong communication tool we can use to help and inform consumers when they go shopping for clothes.

For more information, visit www.oceancleanwash.org and www.life-mermaids.com



GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Mitigation of micro plastics impact caused by textile washing processes

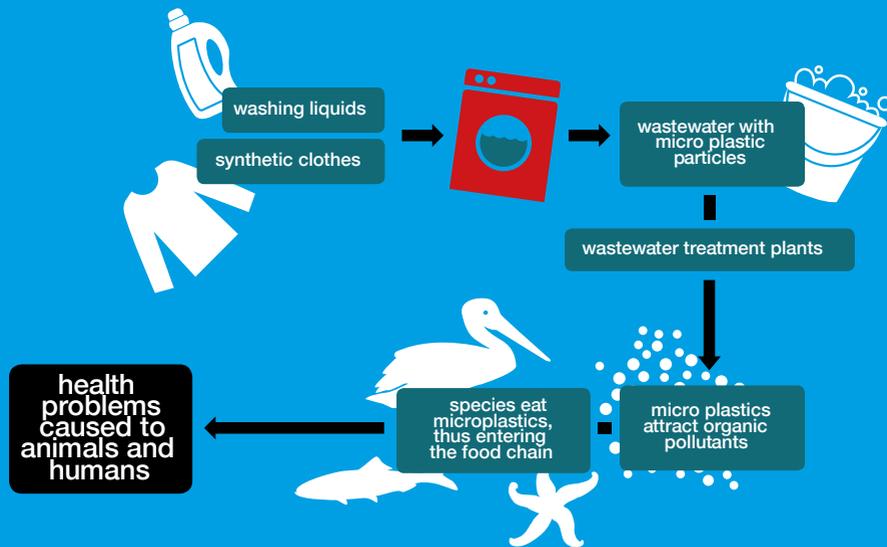
(LIFE13 ENV/IT/001069)

Did you know that...

- * Around 60% of the fashion market is selling synthetic clothes.
- * Europeans do 36 billion loads of washing every year
- * Every wash of synthetic fabrics discharges plastic fibers less than 1mm in length
- * An average of 20,000,000 plastic microfibers are released per wash according to the Mermaids research project



This is the problem ...



Plastic fibers coming from synthetic clothes do not biodegrade, they fragmentize into smaller pieces. These micro- and nanoplastics are smaller than 5mm and usually not visible to the naked eye. They also cannot be blocked through the waste water treatment plants and, consequently, microplastics end up in rivers, lakes, seas and oceans. Eventually, fish mistake these fibers for plankton when they end up in the oceans and seas. Around 65% of the shrimp in the North Sea contain synthetic fibers. And, guess what? We are at the top of the food chain, so they end up in our plates.

One polyester fleece jacket sheds almost a million fibers per wash.

An acrylic scarf: 300,000 fibers.

A pair of nylon socks: 136,000 fibers.



What can you do?

- ★ Wash less
- ★ Fill up your washing machine to the max: washing a full load results in less friction between the clothes and, therefore, less fibers are released.
- ★ Use washing liquid instead of powder: the 'scrub' function of the grains of the powder result in loosening the fibers of clothes more than with liquid.
- ★ Avoid using detergents with a high pH and oxidizing agents
- ★ Wash at a low temperature: when clothes are washed at a high temperature some fabrics are damaged, leading to the release of fibers.
- ★ Avoid long washings: long periods of washing cause more friction between fabrics, which supposes more tearing of the fibers.
- ★ Dry spin clothes at low revs: higher revolutions increase the friction between the clothes, resulting in higher chances of fibers loosening.
- ★ When cleaning the dryer, do not flush the lint down the drain, throw it in the bin
- ★ Avoid buying synthetic clothes and look for wool, cotton, linen, silk, cashmere or other natural fabrics.