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REDUCE YOUR PLASTIC FOOTPRINT

We Do Not Inherit the Earth from Our Ancestors;
We Borrow It from Our Children

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How much plastic do we generate?

According to a recent TOI article, in 30 years, India is tipped to DOUBLE the amount of waste it generates! At present, we generate the most waste globally. While our waste per capita is lower than in some developed countries, the sheer volume of waste, including plastic waste, produced by our 1.3 billion population is expected to increase substantially by 2050.

Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) was first polymerised between 1838-1872. And around 1907, the Belgian-American chemist Leo Baekeland developed Bakelite: the first mass-produced synthetic plastic. In just over 150 years, there are countless types of plastic with 1000's uses.

Over the years, plastic has become a very popular consumer material. Take a minute and look around, within few seconds you can count a handful of objects made out of plastic. Right from our toothbrushes, pens to our tech gadgets like mobile phones and laptops, they are all made of different grades of plastic.



Where does all this plastic go after use?

Once you dispose of your plastic products, did you ever wonder where they end up? **79 per cent of the plastic made in the world enters our land, water and environment as waste; some of it also enters our bodies through the food chain.** Only 9 per cent of the total plastic waste in the world is recycled.

Total annual plastic waste generation in India is at a staggering 3.3 million metric tonnes per year. And 40% of this waste ends up in landfills! So every time you buy and dispose of a plastic item, you increase your plastic footprint.



What is Plastic Footprint?

The Plastic footprint is the measurement of how much plastic consumed by you on a day-to-day basis contributes to the waste in landfills and oceans. This is in addition to the carbon footprint of plastic production.

For example, a single plastic shopping bag generated 33 grams of CO₂. A young tree absorbs about 33 grams per tree per day. So every time, you dispose of a plastic tree, you will need to ensure you plant a young tree to offset the carbon dioxide emissions.

And because plastics take thousands of years to decompose (and some of them, never!), it is important to remember that your Plastic Footprint will outlive you by million years!



How does our Plastic Footprint impact our planet?

India generates about 25,940 tonnes of plastic waste every day. Out of this, 40% of the generated plastic remains uncollected. This causes choking of drainage and accumulating in our natural river systems. It also pollutes various eco-systems such as marine and land eco-system. It causes soil pollution and air pollution when burnt. Additionally,

1. **Animals eat plastic**

Stray animals on road and marine life in oceans, unable to distinguish between edible food and plastic, are consuming huge amounts of plastic accumulated on land & in water and succumb to the harmful toxins released by plastics in their bodies.

2. Eco-system pollution

Plastic pollution causes a threat to marine ecosystems. Plastic in the environment upsets the delicate balance of biodiverse species and habitats. Plastic pollution has arisen in just a few decades and is increasing rapidly. Many species haven't had the chance to recognise the dangers and learn how to deal with it.

3. Plastics in our food chain

Microplastics are minuscule pieces of plastic that enter our natural eco-systems through variety of sources, such as industrial processes, chemical farming practises, processing and packaging and more. These microplastics move up the food chain through plants and animals and eventually end up in the food we consume.

4. Effects of exposure to plastic on human health

Plastic is everywhere! In our food, in our drinking water, and in the air we breathe. And these impacts our health in many ways. Studies show that endocrine-disrupting chemicals, that are commonly used to make plastics, are associated with around eighty diseases, including certain cancer, obesity, and reproductive disorders. Plastics also act as the carriers for pathogens such as bacteria and viruses.



What can you do to reduce your Plastic Footprint?

Every small step leads to a big outcome. Adopting a plastic-free lifestyle is easier than you think. You can start with your home and your own personal space: start by switching to eco-friendly products. Here are 5 easy steps to help you adopt a plastic-free lifestyle:

1 Avoid Single-use plastics

Swapping single-use plastics for eco-friendly products is the first step towards reducing your plastic footprint. Avoid the usage of disposable plastic products. For instance, carry a stainless-steel straw and cutlery in your bag. Use it when stopping by for a quick bite at the local food stall or your favourite juice shop.



2 Carry your own water bottles and coffee mugs

Stay hydrated, and don't forget to carry your own water bottle. This helps avoid the usage of single-use plastic bottles. Remember, a plastic bottle lasts in your hand for 5 minutes but lasts on earth for thousands more. Also, get your coffee break in collapsible coffee mugs to reduce the accumulation of plastic cups & coffee lids.

3 Carry your own bag

You can minimize the accumulation of non-biodegradable shopping bags in the landfills by carrying your own cloth or jute bag every time you go on a grocery run. Leave extra ones in your car or bike.



4 Enjoy the dine-in experience

To reduce the food packaging material, enjoy the fine ambience of your favourite restaurant or café, instead of having your favourite dish delivered home. If you are really craving takeaways, bring your own box containers to the restaurant and have them filled in with your dishes. In India, restaurant food used to be packed in customer's own tiffin boxes even as late as the 80s.

5 Choose bio-degradable products

Switch to products made of biodegradable materials like bamboo and hemp. Something as small as switching to a bamboo toothbrush is easy, while also having a big impact on reducing your plastic footprint.

Conclusion

By swapping out a few single-use plastics for reusable/eco-friendly options every day, you will significantly shrink your plastic footprint while helping the planet in a big way. And, the more people you encourage to join in on your plastic-free lifestyle, the healthier the earth will stay.

It is correctly said that we don't inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, but borrow it from our Children. It is our duty to ensure that what we borrow, we return back in good, if not better, form.

At **Organo Et School**, we believe in connecting children with the natural world at a young age as the first step in creating responsible stewards of our collective future. If you or your children are interested in attending our workshops on Waste Management or Plastic Waste Reduction, please connect to us at oes@organo.co.in and by phone 9154100775

Organo Et School

Organo Et School is the brainchild of team Organo. Organo was founded on the idea of environmentally conscious living and Organo Et School translates that idea into reality by educating and empowering schools, colleges, organizations and communities on the triple bottom line of sustainability. Organo et School aims at engaging individuals of today to stay connected with nature through workshops, live sessions and site visits.



Leading the change

We create an experiential learning environment for people to learn from.

Organo Et School educates people about the challenges of sustainable development and creates opportunities for them to use their creativity and knowledge to pioneer innovative solutions for themselves.

Learners develop a sense of place and belonging to their local community.

**NURTURING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS
WHERE INCLUSIVE HOLISTIC ECO-LIVING IS CELEBRATED**

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