

What everyone
should know about
Plastic



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In collaboration with Future Stars International



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Budumburam, Ghana

Dedicated to my beloved children in the Future Stars International school;
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This is coral, an animal that lives on the ocean floor. Can you see the beauty that nature has given us? Besides that beauty, coral also has the function of feeding fish and it forms a barrier for waves that prevents floodings.

This is the ocean, with plastic inside. A lot of plastic ends up in the ocean, through the wind or the rivers. A common name for the ocean nowadays is 'plastic soup.'

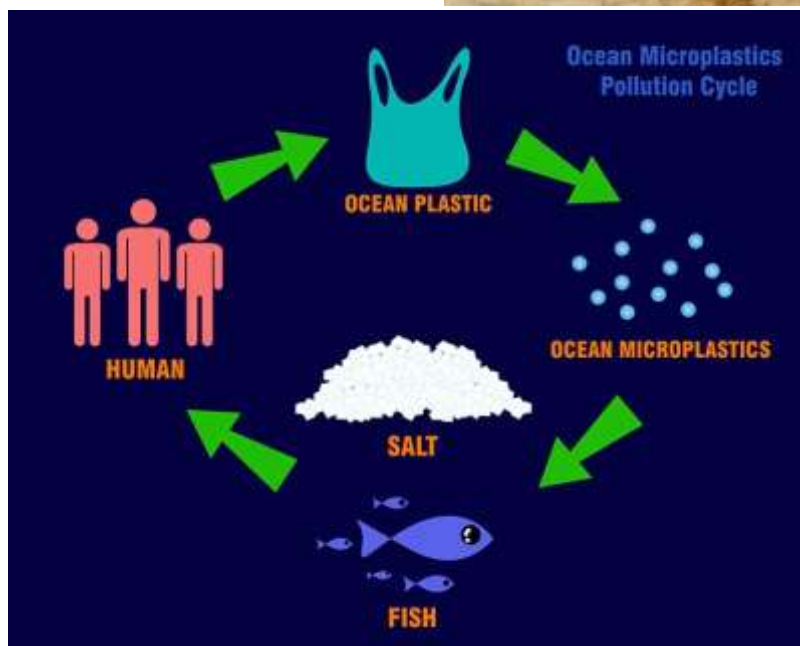


The plastic breaks down into small pieces, so small that we can't see them anymore. We call these pieces microplastic.



The microplastic destroys the coral. This means that the fish have less food to eat. And the land around the sea will flood easier.

The fish will assume the plastic is food.

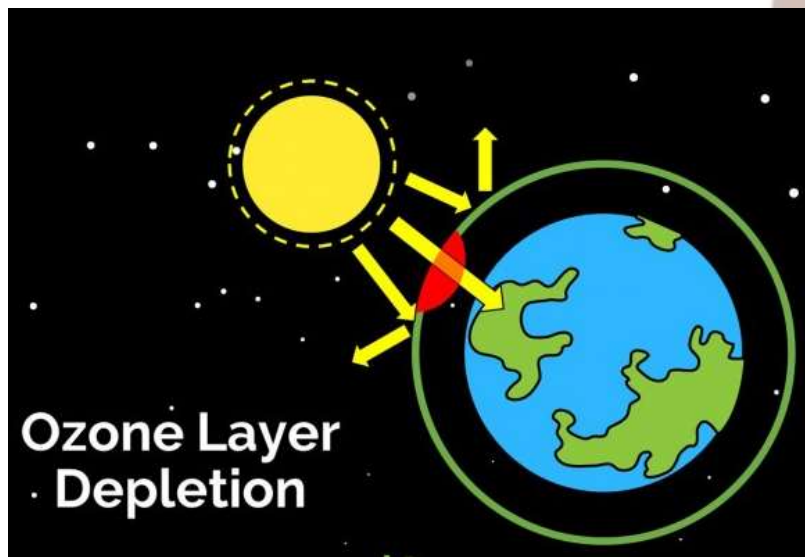
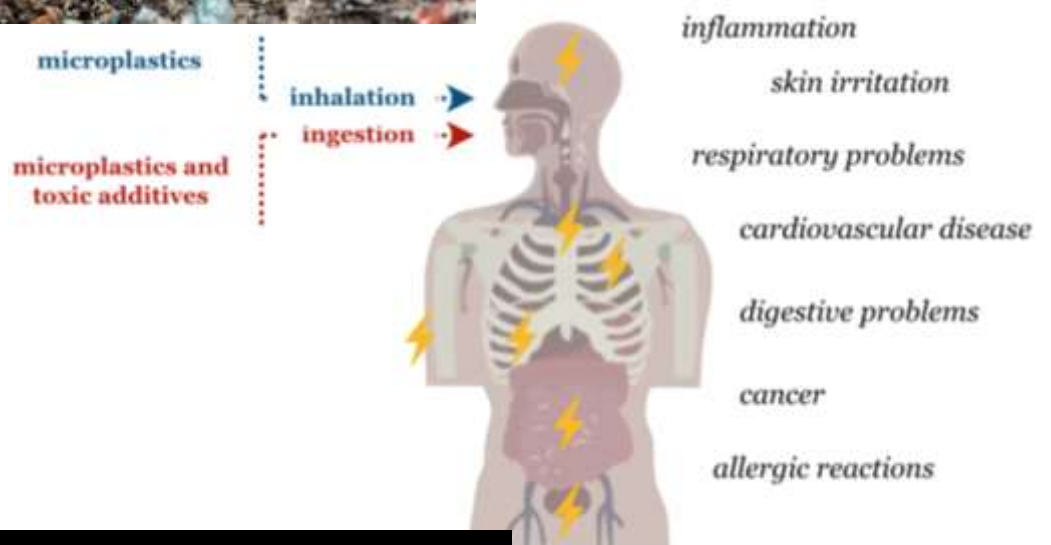


The fish and the salt will contain microplastic. Humans will eat of the fish and salt. The microplastic will end up in the human body.



Burning plastic is also a common way of getting rid of waste. The smoke of the plastic will end up in the air and in the human body through breathing.

Plastic contains chemicals. The microplastic that ends up in the human body can cause different diseases and negative effects as shown in the picture.



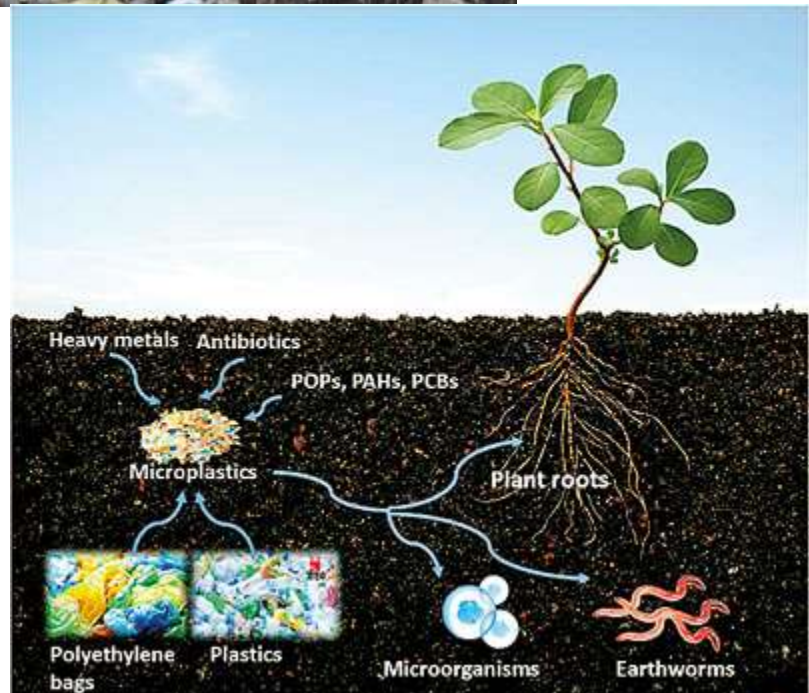
The smoke of burning plastic, together with the smoke from factories and cars, does harm to the ozone layer. The ozone layer is a protective layer around the earth. It protects the earth and its living beings from the direct sunlight. When the ozone layer depletes, the sun will be hotter on the

earth. This means that the seasons will change. The dry season will be hotter and dryer, and in the raining season, more rain will fall. The storms and floodings will be heavier. This does harm to the plants, the animals and the human beings on earth.



When plastic is left on the soil, it will also break down into microplastic. The rain can take it deep into the soil.

It takes 25 years for plastic to rot, destroying the soil while it is rotting. The microplastic in the soil will affect the roots of plants, the earthworms and the healthy bacteria. These plants are not able to grow fast again, or can get sick.





When you throw plastic in gutters, and it becomes plenty, the rainwater will not be able to flow well. It can cause floodings.

These floodings can do a lot of harm to people and their houses, cars and other properties.



Plastic was invented a long time ago. It is made from oil that we get from somewhere deep underground. Plastic is beautiful! It is so flexible, easy to use, it can keep food fresh, it is easy to make and it is cheap. But as we have read in this book, plastic doesn't only have benefits, it also has a lot of negative effects.

What can we do about our plastic problem?

There are different things we can do about the plastic problem in the world.

One is to reduce our plastic waste. For example, we can take our own reusable bags to the market, instead of taking a plastic bag. When buying food, we can take our own bowl instead of taking a single-use plastic bowl. There are many alternative materials that can be used instead of plastic but that have the same qualities as plastic. For example, a common used material is bamboo.



Another thing that we can do is recycling plastic. Many people buy plastic waste. They clean it, melt it and convert it into new plastic. Often you can even make money out of gathering plastic and selling it to those who recycle it.

A last thing that we can do is letting our governments and business companies know that we don't like plastic. We can ask governments to set rules in the country. And we can motivate companies to find alternative ways to selling products wrapped in plastic.

On the next page you can find some practical and fun assignments to bring your knowledge into practice.

Assignments

Assignment 1: active understanding

1. What are 2 qualities of coral?
2. What is the name of the small pieces of plastic?
3. How can plastic harm human health?
4. State 4 negative effects of plastic on the earth
5. State 3 ways of fighting the plastic problem

Assignment 2: waste is art

Gather your waste and make art with plastic rubbish

Assignment 3: community cleaning

Together with your whole class, go outside and pick up the plastic. Motivate people around you to join. Separate the sellable pieces like bottles from the non-sellable pieces. You can sell the sellable pieces to make money. Wash your hands after picking the rubbish

Assignment 4: say no

Go to the market with your own shopping bag and say NO to plastic bags

Assignment 5: waste is money

Gather all your plastic in a month, sell the sellable plastics and count the money you have gotten.

Assignment 6: spread the message

Go to another class or school and ask the teacher for permission to give the class a lesson about the negative effects of plastics.

Assignment 7: make a bigger change

Write a letter to the government or a big company. Ask them to reduce plastic waste and find alternative ways to package things.

Assignment 8: be the journalist

Go to the street and interview people about the issue. Ask them how they think about plastic, if they know something about the issue and if they have any idea what to do about it.

List of sources:

The following websites can guide you to:

1. A broader knowledge

<https://www.plasticsoupfoundation.org/en/>

<https://www.mynewsdesk.com/bluewater/pressreleases/saving-the-world-from-ocean-plastics-pollution-has-much-to-learn-from-the-success-in-healing-the-ozone-level-says-bluewater-2919665#:~:text=Research%20has%20also%20shown%20production,and%20bromine%20th at%20destroys%20ozone>

<https://www.ehn.org/plastic-in-farm-soil-and-food-2647384684.html>

2. Further action and inspiration:

<https://globalplasticaction.org/countries/ghana/>

<https://www.gh.undp.org/content/ghana/en/home/presscenter/articles/2022/reducing-plastic-waste-menace-in-ghana-.html>

https://globalplasticaction.org/wp-content/uploads/NPAP_Ghana_Action_Roadmap.pdf

All pictures are found on google images

This book is written by Maartje van Leuven. I was doing an internship with Future Stars International in Ghana in 2022. I was talking with the children about plastic waste, some of them were very interested and motivated to do something. So I set up some initiatives, we are gathering plastic waste to sell and I taught the Junior High School about the problem with plastic. The students were so enthusiastic and wanted to go and teach other classes in other schools. We taught the Junior High of two other schools. One of the headmasters said we should write a book about it. I liked everyone's enthusiasm, I saw the potential to inspire a broad public in Ghana or worldwide with the story. So I decided to write a book. I wanted the story to be short, catchy, inspiring and easy for everyone to understand.



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