

# HOW TO PROTECT MYSELF?



## REDUCE USAGE



Reduce your usage of plastic as much as possible, but especially eating and drinking from plastic bottles and containers.

## NO HEATED PLASTIC



Try to never heat food or beverages in plastic containers, or to drink from plastic water bottles that have been in the sun. Heating plastic increases the likelihood of chemicals from the plastic getting into your food.



## LESS POLYESTER



Try to limit wearing and purchasing polyester clothing. Polyester is a form of plastic and when these clothing items are washed, microplastics enter drinking water systems.

*Note: It is incredibly difficult – if not impossible in some communities – to live a single day without using plastic. While we should all be mindful of our consumption to protect ourselves and the environment, the plastic pollution problem is about more than consumer choice. We are working towards systemic shifts as this is the fault of corporations & government. Please be kind to yourself.*

## ABOUT US

Black Women for Wellness is committed to the health and well-being of Black women and girls through health education, research, advocacy, and empowerment.

Plastic is everywhere - in cosmetics, our clothes, food and beverage packaging, toys, car parts, and so much more. Unfortunately, plastic is a product of the fossil fuel industry and making plastic is a chemical process that causes harm at each stage. Low income and people of color are affected the most by this toxic supply chain. Read on to learn more!

You deserve to be well.  
To be safe. To be protected.



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# THE LIFE OF PLASTIC: A REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE ISSUE



An educational guide brought to you by Black Women for Wellness' Environmental Justice Team

www.bwwla.org

# THE LIFECYCLE OF PLASTIC POLLUTION

## Extraction

Since plastic is made from fossil fuels, the first step of the lifecycle is extracting fossil fuels like oil and gas from the earth.

## Refinement

Fossil fuels are refined into petrochemicals which eventually become the plastic we all recognize. Petrochemical facilities are polluting people and the earth.

## Transportation

Fossil fuels and petrochemicals must be transported. During transportation accidents like oil spills or train derailments happen that contaminate communities.

## Plastic Production

Petrochemicals go through an intensive process to be turned into plastic. Both petrochemical plants and facilities that make the plastic are bad for people and bad for the environment.

## Distribution & Consumption

After plastic is produced, it's distributed, sold, and put to use. Half of this plastic is for a single-use, like a water bottle or plastic bag, and ExxonMobil is the biggest single-use plastic producer in the world.

## Disposal

Plastic is either **1.** Incinerated **2.** Disposed of in a landfill or **3.** Left in the environment. All of these options pollute the air, soil, and water, and harm human health. Less than 10% of plastic ever produced has been recycled, and even plastic that is recycled will eventually end up in one of these 3 places.



## HOW AM I IMPACTED?

### Toxic Chemicals

A recent study found that there are over 300 chemicals in 1 plastic bottle. Of these, 150 of them have been found to leach into food and beverages.

### Microplastics

Microplastics - very small pieces of plastic - have been found in fish that people consume, placenta, the feces of babies and adults, breast milk, and more. This means that microplastics are very likely in each of our bodies at this very moment.

### Fossil Fuel Extraction

Everyone is impacted by one or many stages of the lifecycle of plastic pollution. In LA, toxic oil extraction has caused significant health harm to residents who live near the sites. This harm includes reduced lung function, asthma, pre-term birth and low birthweight, cancer, premature death, and more.

# PLASTIC POLLUTION VIOLATES THE REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE TENETS



## THE RIGHT TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE A CHILD

Tenets 1 & 2

Some chemicals emitted, leached, or spilled during the lifecycle of plastic pollution are endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) that harm the human hormonal system and can contribute to a higher risk of reproductive harm.

## THE RIGHT TO RAISE A FAMILY IN SAFE & HEALTHY CONDITIONS

Tenet 3



Petrochemical and plastic production facilities, oil and gas extraction zones, and other polluting sites are commonly placed in communities of color making it impossible to raise a family in a healthy environment.



## THE RIGHT TO BODILY AUTONOMY

Tenet 4

There is an 85 mile stretch of land in Louisiana nicknamed 'cancer alley' with over 170 chemical plants. Residents there, and elsewhere with such facilities, are denied bodily autonomy by being forced to bear the brunt of harm from plastic pollution.