

# You swallow 100,000 plastic particles every year



Zoe Drewett

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Microplastics end up in the soil, rivers, oceans and air because of plastic pollution (Picture: Getty)

**The average person eats and drinks at least 50,000 plastic particles each year and breathes in the same amount, a new study has found.**

In the first study to estimate human ingestion of plastic pollution, researchers said the true number is likely to be even higher, as only a small number of foods and drinks were analysed.

The research, published in the journal **Environmental Science and Technology**, found microplastics present in the air, soil, rivers and oceans make their way into human bodies.

According to a report by **the Guardian**, the health impacts of ingesting plastic are still not known, but some pieces of microplastic are small enough to penetrate human tissues, where they could trigger immune reactions.

Kieran Cox, who led the study at the University of Victoria, Canada, said only 15 per cent of food and drink products were tested, and the study did not include bread, processed food, meat, dairy or vegetables – which may well contain plastic too.

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Mr Cox said: 'We don't know a huge amount. There are some major data gaps that need to get filled.'

'It is really highly likely there is going to be large amounts of plastic particles in these. You could be heading into the hundreds of thousands.'



**Data on bottled water showed it contains 22 times more microplastic than tap water (Picture: Getty)**



Scientists said the health effects of swallowing plastic is not yet known (Picture: Reuters)

The study took data from 26 previous studies that measured the amounts of microplastic particles in fish, shellfish, sugar, salt, beer and water, as well as in the air in cities.

Microplastics were first found in human stool samples in October, confirming that people ingest the particles.

The largest amount of data was on bottled water, which showed it contains 22 times more microplastic than tap water.

A person who only drank bottled water would consume 130,000 particles per year compared with 4,000 from tap water, the researchers found.

Mr Cox said 'most inhaled particles will be ingested' rather than coughed or sneezed out and that the high number of particles found was a 'potential alarm call for sure'.

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The European commission's chief scientific advisers said in a report in April: 'The evidence [on the environmental and health risks of microplastics] provides grounds for genuine concern and for precaution to be exercised.'

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Researchers said people stop using single-use plastic and companies that use plastic packaging.

Mr Cox said: 'The facts are simple. We are producing a lot of plastic and it is ending up in the ecosystems, which we are a part of.'



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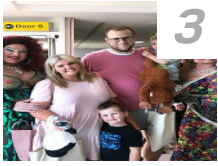
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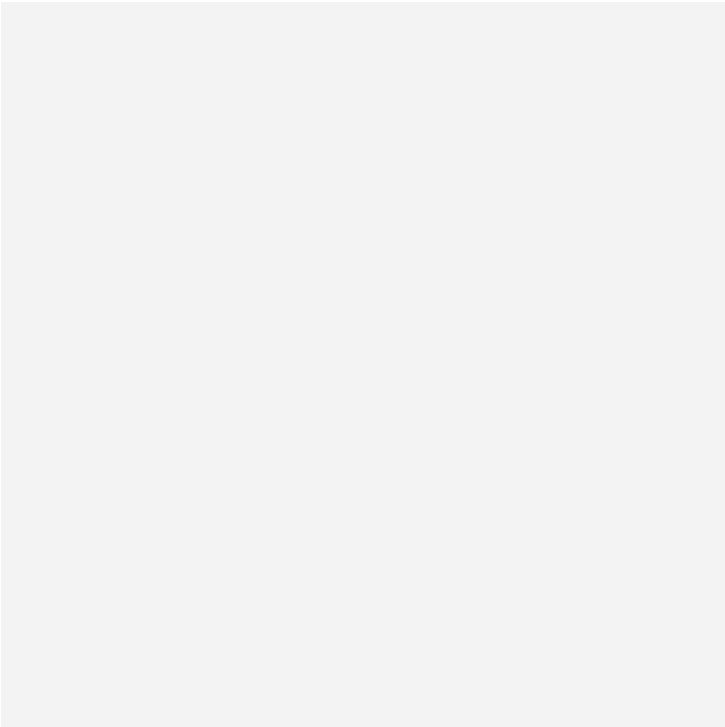
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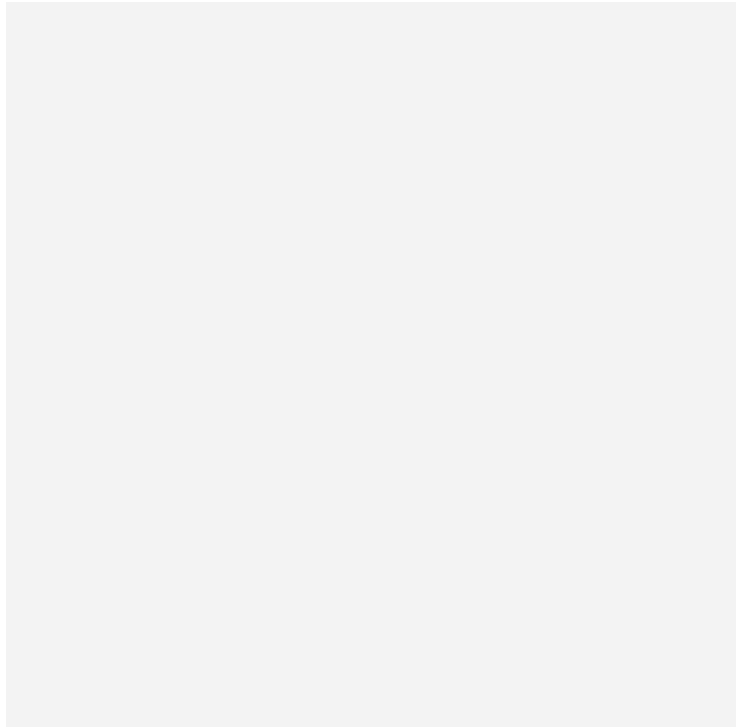
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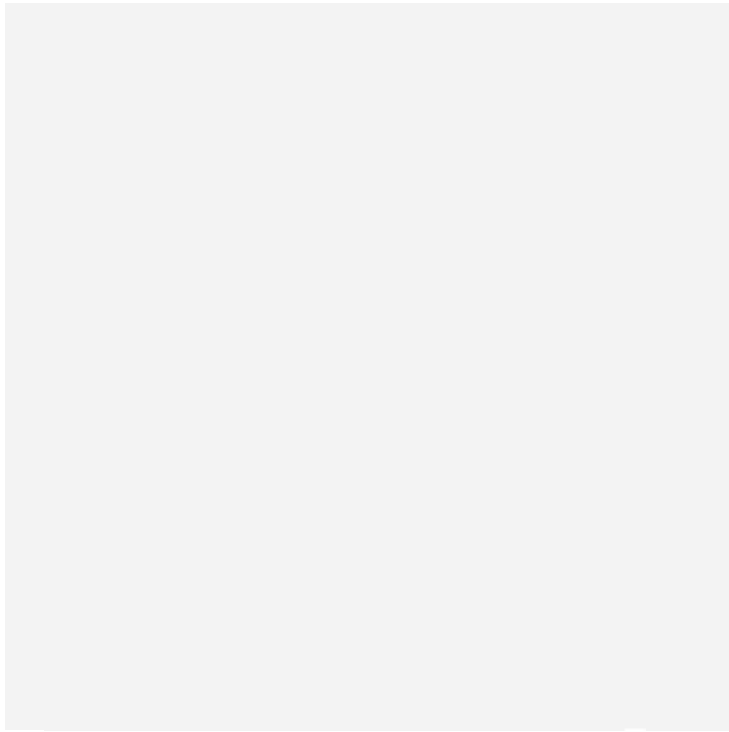
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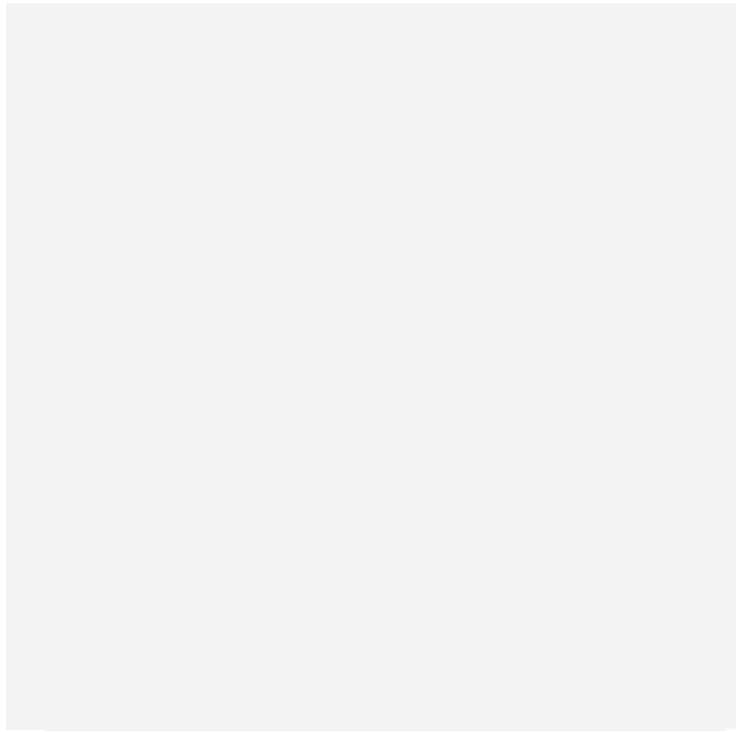
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