**End Plastic Pollution**

****Ending plastic pollution is the 2018 Earth Day theme. Since the 1950s, we’ve produced 9.1 billion tons of plastic, and 6.9 billion tons has ended up as waste. Only 9% is recycled, and the rest goes to landfills or the environment. If current plastic use trends continue, there will be 13.2 billion tons of plastic waste in landfills and the environment by 2050.

Plastics are a health hazard. Plastic containers, nonstick pans, and packaging film leach chemicals into food. Research has shown correlations between plastic chemical levels and reproductive system abnormalities, cancer, and metabolic diseases such as diabetes and obesity.

Plastic is a climate hazard. It’s a petroleum product, and accounts for 8% of global oil production. Plastic production releases greenhouse gases and contributes to global warming.

The Earth Day Network recommends 5 steps you can take to fight plastic pollution:

**Reduce**

* Bring re-usable cloth bags to shop at all stores. Use mesh bags for produce.
* Stop buying water in single use plastic bottles.
* Buy items in bulk, and avoid items with excessive plastic packaging.

**Refuse**

* Say no to plastic straws. (Does anyone over age 7 really need a straw for water or pop?)
* Refuse plastic bags for your purchases.

**Re-Use**

* Get a reusable water bottle instead of single use plastic water bottles. Caring for Creation will sell you a reusable bottle for $5!
* Bring a dish, metal silverware, and a mug to your office to use for lunches, beverages, and snacks.
* Use reusable containers, or wax lined bags for sandwiches, instead of single use plastic bags.
* If you often bring leftovers home from restaurants, bring your own reusable storage containers.
* Consider washable cloth diapers instead of disposable plastic diapers.

**Recycle**

* Recycle the plastic that you can’t refuse or re-use, **but check with your local waste recycler** to sure you’re recycling properly. Most recyclers accept plastic coded 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7.
* Take plastic bags, newspaper sleeves, and dry cleaning bags to the grocery store for recycling.

**Remove**

* Remove existing plastic from the environment by participating in beach, river, forest, or roadside cleanups.
* The Conservation Foundation’s annual DuPage River Sweep is Saturday, May 19. See [www.theconservationfounation.org](http://www.theconservationfounation.org) for details.

Go to [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org) for links to many articles and videos, plus a Plastic Primer Pollution and Action Kit, which includes a plastic pollution footprint calculator, and a personal plastic reduction plan.

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