



Lanes
Group plc

THE HIDDEN PLASTIC PROBLEM

HOW TO BE A HIDDEN PLASTIC HERO AND SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT



Plastic is one of the most useful materials we have for making things.

Toys, games, bags, boxes, electronics of all sorts - just think about the number of items you use every day that contain plastic, and how hard it would be to do without them!

However, **plastic also has a lot of problems.**

Unlike many of the other materials we use for building - such as wood, fabric or even metal - plastic is completely artificial, meaning it was designed by humans rather than occurring naturally.

As a result, it contains a lot of chemicals that can **damage the environment.**

One of the reasons plastics are used so often is because they last for a long time without wearing out.

However, when plastics get out into the natural world, this is a **bad thing.**

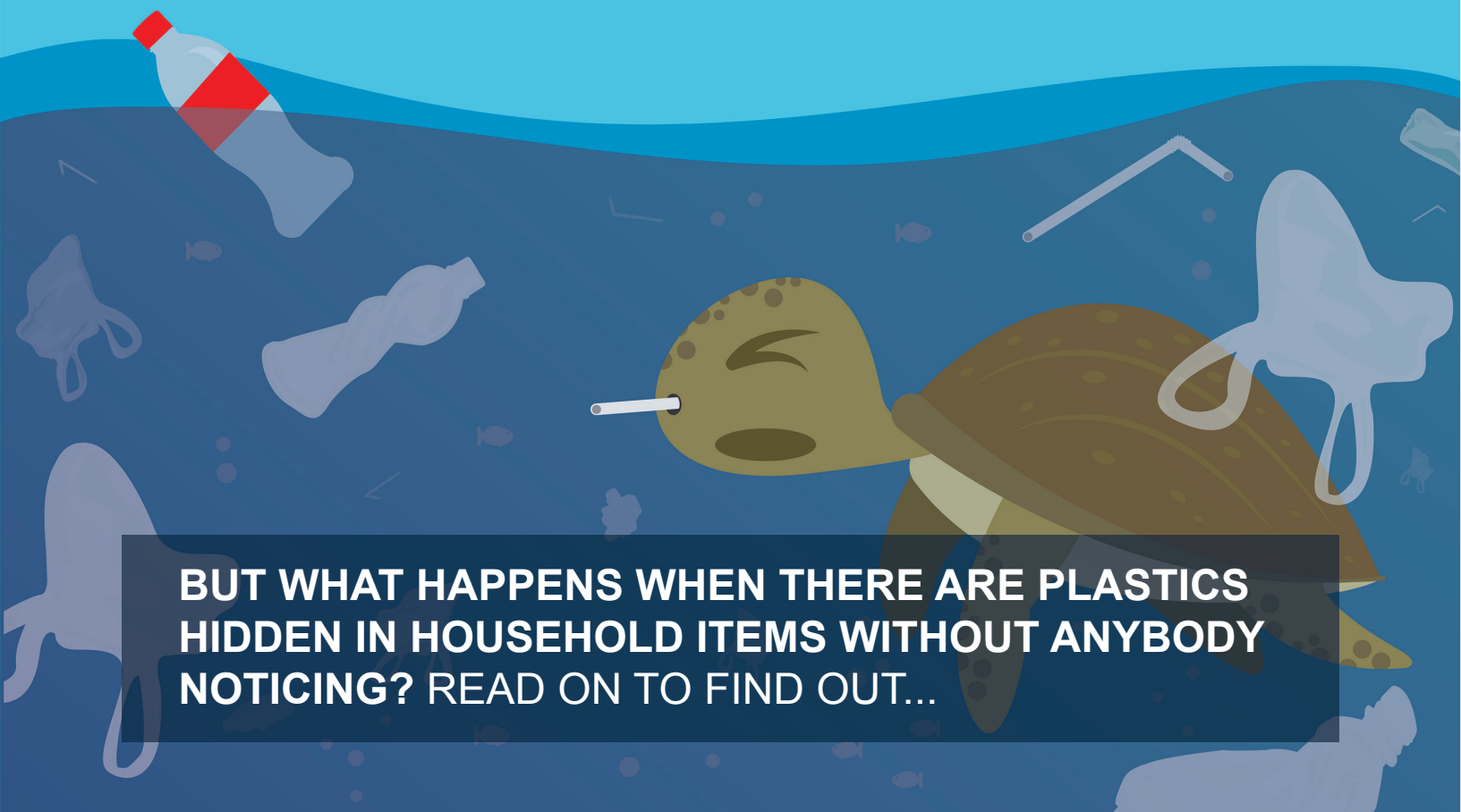
Most other materials we throw away will be broken apart over time by tiny bacteria and absorbed safely back into the environment - a process known as **biodegradation** - but plastics aren't biodegradable, which means they remain in the same condition for many years.

If you buried a paper bag and a plastic bag in the soil, the paper one would disappear after a few months - but the plastic one could remain there for **hundreds of years!**

This becomes a real problem when humans **don't take care to throw away their rubbish properly** - if you throw plastic on the ground or flush it down the toilet, it will pollute the land and sea for many years.

This is **very dangerous** to the environment for many reasons. Animals on the land and in the ocean often get tangled up in old plastic items, or they may mistake the plastic for food, which puts their lives at risk. Also, the toxic chemicals contained in these plastics can poison nearby plants and water - which can lead to **people and animals becoming very ill or dying.**

You and your friends can stop this from happening by making sure plastic gets safely **recycled**, rather than ending up in a big rubbish pile or floating in the sea.



BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THERE ARE PLASTICS HIDDEN IN HOUSEHOLD ITEMS WITHOUT ANYBODY NOTICING? READ ON TO FIND OUT...

WHAT IS A HIDDEN PLASTIC?

If you and your family do a lot of recycling, you'll be able to identify a lot of common plastic items **straight away**.

Plastic bags, bottles, food packaging - it's easy to tell that these are made of plastic, which makes it much easier to know where they're supposed to go when you're finished with them.

But what if there were also a lot of other items in your house right now that contain hidden plastic that's really hard to spot, without even your parents realising it?

If that was the case, then it'd be a lot harder to stop those things from accidentally getting thrown away in the wrong place - or worse, **flushed down the toilet**, where they might end up blocking the pipes or harming animals in the sea.

Unfortunately, **hidden plastics are a real problem**, and they are a lot more common than many adults realise. Here are just a few items that contain plastics you may not know about:



TEABAGS

Tea bags may look like they are made of paper or fabric, but they actually contain plastics to make sure they don't fall apart! This may be useful when making tea, but it also means they can cause damage to the environment if they end up being thrown in the wrong place.

CHEWING GUM

Many of the most popular types of chewing gum contain the same types of plastic that you might find in plastic bottles or bicycle tyres - which means that if you throw your gum on the ground, it will stay there for a very long time!



PAPER CUPS

You might think that the "paper" cups given out at cafes and coffee shops are made of 100% paper, but it's not actually that simple! Many of these cups feature a plastic lining to help keep the drink as warm, and this means they can't be safely recycled with the rest of your paper waste.

COTTON BUDS

The tips of a cotton bud are biodegradable, but the sticks are made of plastic, which means they can create a very serious blockage if they go down the drains. Animals in the sea very often mistake cotton buds for food, too.





NAPPIES

Nappies contain a lot of plastic to make them tougher. This means they can take up to 500 years to break down naturally!

WET WIPES

Wet wipes look just like tissues, and they are often advertised as being safe to flush down the toilet, which is why many people don't understand how bad they are for the environment. In reality, they contain a lot of plastic to make them last longer - which means you shouldn't ever put them down the loo!



PERIOD PRODUCTS

Older girls and adult women will often need to use certain products, including sanitary towels and tampons, that contain many of the same types of plastic you might find in nappies. A lot of people don't realise how dangerous it is to flush these down the toilet, so it's very important to make sure nobody is doing it!

SO, NOW YOU KNOW WHERE HIDDEN PLASTICS MIGHT BE LURKING... BUT WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO ROOT THEM OUT?

READ ON TO FIND OUT MORE...



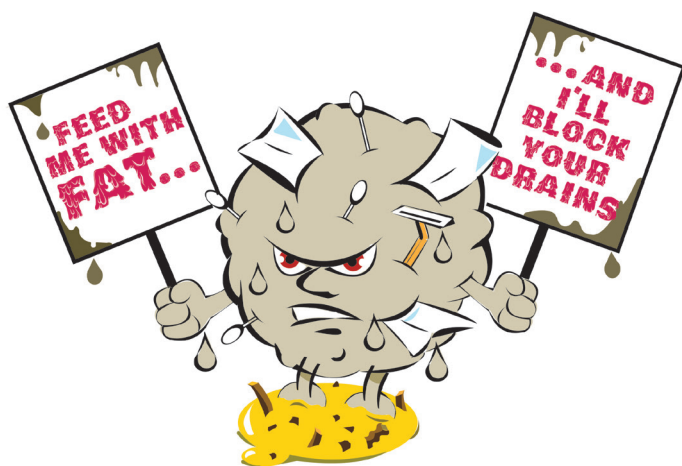
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A HIDDEN PLASTIC HERO



As we've just learned, hidden plastics are very hard to find, and many adults don't even know about them - but just because they're hidden, it doesn't mean they can't have a big impact on the environment.

When items containing hidden plastics get flushed down the toilet, they create really disgusting blockages known as **fatbergs**.

These are created when wet wipes, nappies and other non-biodegradable items clump together with the fat, oil and grease that also gets wrongly poured down kitchen sinks to form a big, smelly mess that's as **hard as concrete**, and just as difficult to remove!



These fatbergs can grow to amazing sizes - recently, a fatberg was found underground in London that was **250 metres long** - the length of 11 double-decker buses or two Wembley football pitches!

Even if these plastics don't get stuck in a fatberg, they can end up in our oceans, where they sadly kill unfortunate fish, birds and sea life that mistake the plastics for food. These plastics can even end up in our **seafood and tap water**, which is **very bad for our health**.

These are very serious problems - but at the moment, **people are not doing enough** to stop this kind of plastic pollution.

Even though a lot of people understand that it's wrong to flush away wet wipes and other items containing hidden plastics, many are still doing it anyway - and the result is that **eight million tonnes of plastic are dumped in the ocean every year**.

WITH SO MANY ADULTS GETTING CAUGHT OUT, IT'S TIME FOR KIDS TO STEP UP AND BE HIDDEN PLASTIC HEROES!

READ ON TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR WHOLE FAMILY DISPOSE OF PLASTICS THE RIGHT WAY...



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

The good news about the hidden plastic problem is that all it takes to solve it for good is for **people to make changes in their habits, and to think more about what goes in the bin and what goes in the toilet and down your sink.**

The bad news is that old habits are hard to break!

That's where you come in. We need you to be a **hidden plastic hero** by learning all about the household items that do the most damage to the environment, and doing your bit to make sure they're used and disposed of the right way!

Here are four of the most important ways you can help:

1. BE A BINNER, NOT A SINNER!

Have a look again at the list of items that contain hidden plastics, and make a real effort to make sure they always go **in the bin**, rather than down the toilet.

It may take a bit of work on your part, but you'll be doing the whole planet a big favour!

2. BAN THE WET WIPE!

If you or your family are guilty of flushing wet wipes, why not try to persuade your parents to **stop buying them altogether?**

There are plenty of other cleaning products that will do the job, without causing the same risk to the safety of the drains or the oceans, after all!

3. HELP TO LOOK FOR ECO-FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVES

Because hidden plastics are such a menace, many companies are now looking for ways to get rid of products that promote plastic pollution and replace them with greener alternatives that are much better for the environment.

If you're out shopping with your family, help them to **keep an eye out for eco-friendly products**

4. SPREAD THE MESSAGE!

A true hidden plastic hero knows it is everyone's responsibility to help protect our sewers, oceans and environment.

SO SHARE YOUR NEWFOUND KNOWLEDGE OF HIDDEN PLASTICS WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY, AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO ALSO

BE A BINNER, NOT A SINNER!

