

End Plastic Soup

‘Microplastic fibres are shed from synthetic clothing with every wash and are the main contributors to micro plastic contamination of the oceans’ - WI Campaign Action Pack

- Over 60% of the plastic debris found at sea is from microfibres from our clothing. Too small to be caught by filters in washing machines or water treatment plants, they are washed into the seas.
- One full washing machine load of:
 - acrylic releases 730,000 microscopic plastic fibres
 - polyester 500,000
 - polycotton 140,000
- Microplastics (pieces of plastic the size of a grain of rice or less, including microfibres from clothing) have been found everywhere from the arctic to antarctica, and at vast depths.
- Some debris ends up in a ‘plastic soup’ of microplastics and visible plastic waste:
- A vast area of ‘plastic soup’ twice the size of Texas is floating in the Pacific Ocean, sucked towards a still centre by rotating currents. There are similar patches in other oceans, plus ‘hotspots’ in eg the Mediterranean and bays lined with large cities.
- The ‘soup’ not only floats, but hangs suspended below the surface.
- It is predicted that by 2050, without action, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.

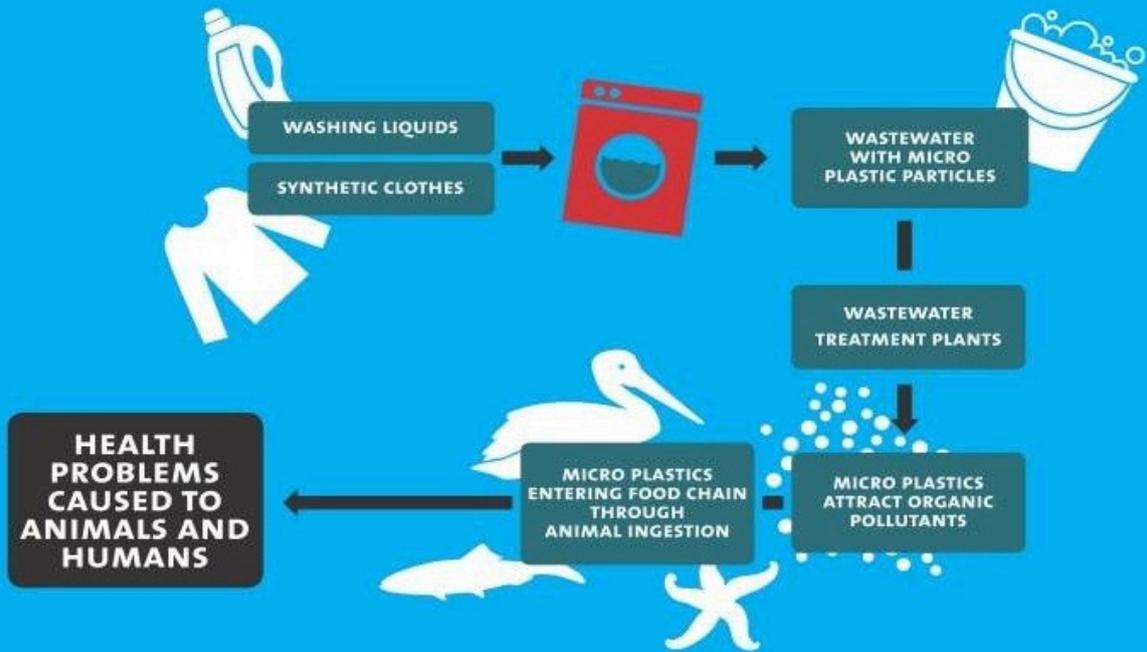
Microplastics present a serious threat to human health and marine ecosystems - the UN

- Chemicals in plastic, and also chemicals which attach themselves to plastic, can cause poisoning, infertility and genetic disruption in marine life.
- More than a quarter of all fish now contain plastic.
- Harmful chemicals linked to plastic have been found in species from plankton to dolphins.
- The entire food chain is at risk, including human beings.

What can we do to reduce the amount of microfibres entering the seas and the food chain?

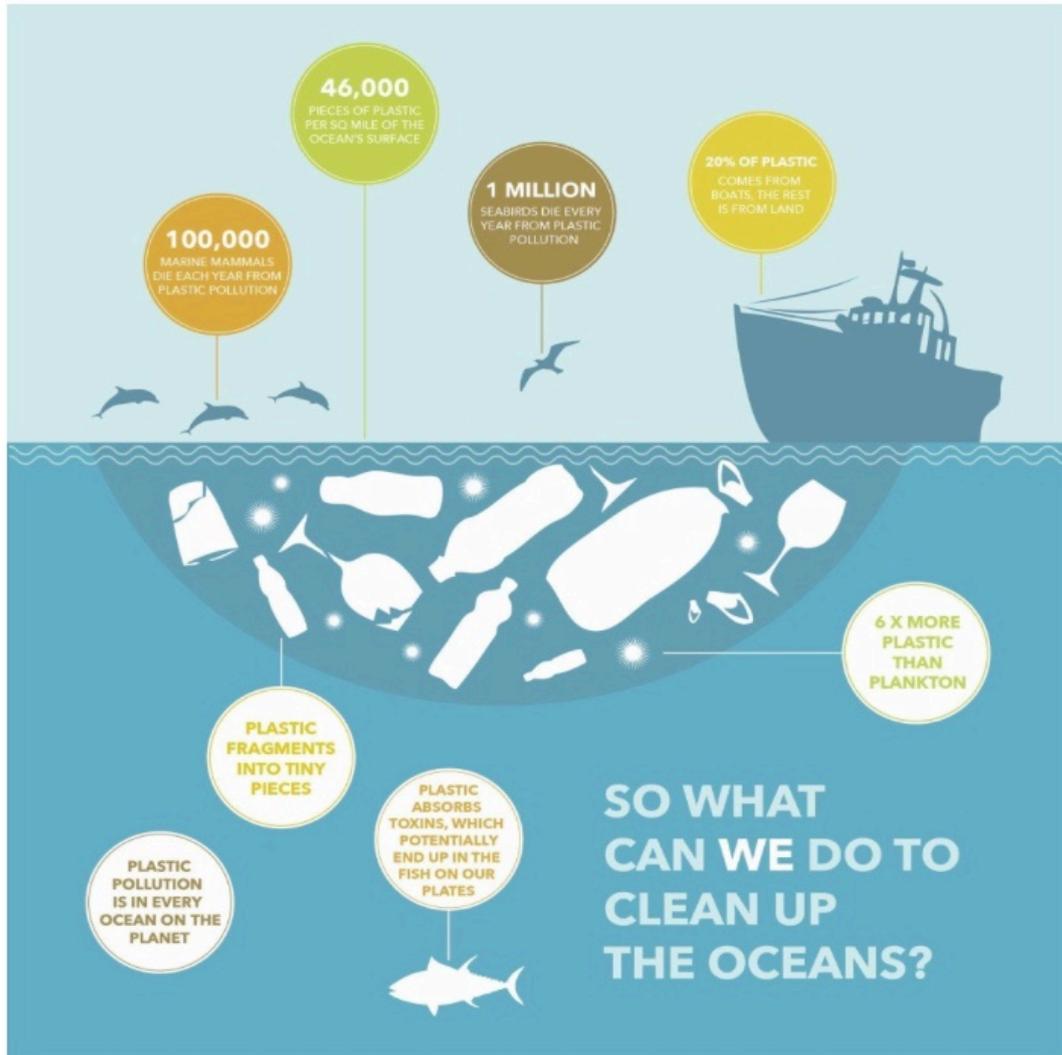
- **Avoid long wash cycles**
- **Wash full loads**
 - causes less friction between the clothes and therefore fewer fibres are released
- **Use washing liquid instead of powder**
 - the 'scrub' action of the grains of powder loosen the fibres more than liquid
- **Wash at a lower temperature**
 - high temperatures can damage fabrics and release more fibres
- **Dispose of lint in your dryer in the bin, not flushed away**
- **Buy clothes made from natural materials such as cotton, wool, linen**

This is the problem ...



WAITER, THERE'S PLASTIC IN MY SOUP!





Microplastic particles constitute a significant part of the 'plastic soup' clogging oceans. (EXTREME-PHOTOGRAPHER / Istock.com)