

World Environment Day 2018



“**Beat Plastic Pollution**”, the theme for World Environment Day 2018, is a call to action for all of us to come together to combat one of the great environmental challenges of our time. Chosen by this year’s host, India, the theme of World Environment Day 2018 invites us all to consider how we can make changes in our everyday lives to reduce the heavy burden of plastic pollution on our natural places, our wildlife – and our own health.

While plastic has many valuable uses, we have become over reliant on single-use or disposable plastic – with severe environmental consequences. Around the world, 1 million plastic drinking bottles are purchased *every minute*. 500 billion disposable plastic bags are used worldwide every year. In total, 50 per cent of the plastic we use is single use.

Nearly one third of the plastic packaging we use escapes collection systems, which means that it ends up clogging our city streets and polluting our natural environment. Every year, up to 13 million tons of plastic leak into our oceans, where it smothers coral reefs and threatens vulnerable marine wildlife. The plastic that ends up in the oceans can circle the Earth four times in a single year, and it can persist for up to 1,000 years before it fully disintegrates.

Plastic also makes its way into our water supply – and thus into our bodies. What harm does that cause? Scientists still aren’t sure, but plastics contain a number of chemicals, many of which are toxic or disrupt hormones. Plastics can also serve as a magnet for other pollutants, including dioxins, metals and pesticides.

If you can’t reuse it, refuse it

This year’s World Environment Day provides an opportunity for each of us to embrace the many ways that we can help to combat plastic pollution around the world. And you don’t have to wait until 5 June to act.

There are so many things that we can do – from asking the restaurants you frequent to stop using plastic straws, to bringing your own coffee mug to work, to pressuring your local authorities to improve how they manage your city’s waste. Here are some other specific ideas:

- Bring your own shopping bags to the supermarket
- Pressure food suppliers to use non-plastic packaging
- Refuse plastic cutlery
- Pick up any plastic you see the next time you go for a walk on the beach