

Help keep plastic out of our waters

Plastic microbeads used in some personal care products and over-the-counter drugs are polluting our waterways. They wash down drains, slip through wastewater treatment plants and end up in our streams, rivers and lakes.

Scientists have found high concentrations of plastics in U.S. waterbodies, particularly the Great Lakes. In 2012 researchers found microbead densities of 466,000 pieces per square kilometer in a section of Lake Erie. Microbeads have been found on Lake Champlain beaches.

There are now over 100 personal care products sold today that use plastic microbeads as exfoliants. There are natural and effective alternatives that are safer for fish, wildlife and people.



Microplastics found in these and other personal care products are polluting our waterways. Help keep them out of Lake Champlain by supporting legislation to ban their manufacture and sale.

Legislation has been introduced in both Vermont and New York to ban plastic microbeads from personal care products and over-the-counter drugs. Help us get it passed! Here's why:

1. Plastics have no place in our waterways. They harm fish, wildlife and ecosystem health.

There are numerous studies documenting the physical and toxicological effects of plastic in the environment. Microplastics are of particular concern because they have the potential to be ingested by a much wider range of organisms than large plastic debris, making them and the chemicals they carry bioavailable throughout the food chain.

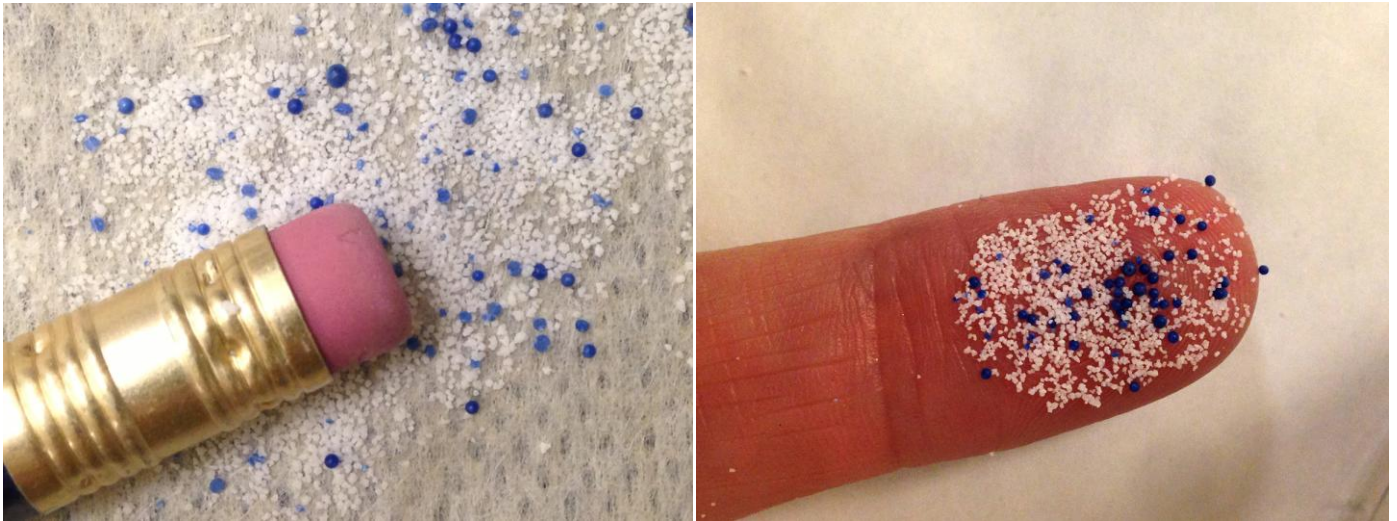
- Some microbeads are the size of fish eggs. Larger fish and other aquatic organisms eat them, thinking they're food. This can result in reduced food consumption, stunted growth and starvation. When plankton, mussels or fish fill up on plastic junk food they are likely to lose their appetite for healthier food.
- Plastics absorb toxins such as PAHs, PCBs, and DDT which can be passed up the food chain to fish, wildlife and ultimately, humans.

2. We don't need microbeads to clean our faces, teeth or bodies.

There are safer, bio-degradable, non-polluting alternative products that have been used for years that do a fine job of keeping us clean and hygienic without degrading our waterways, taxing our wastewater treatment systems, and confusing the fish. Seventh Generation, Aveda, St. Ives, Burt's Bees and many other brands already use ground nut shells, jojoba, oatmeal, sea salt, or almond meal as natural exfoliants and abrasives.

3. Microbeads cannot be removed from our waters once they are there.

We must keep them from getting into the water in the first place. Microbeads are actually designed to be washed down the drain and through our pipes with no possibility of recycling or recovery. They're small enough to pass through wastewater treatment facilities and can also enter waterways through combined sewer overflows that bypass sewage treatment plants during heavy storms.



Microbeads range in size but are usually one millimeter or smaller. Photos courtesy of Alliance for the Great Lakes.

What you can do

Contact your legislators

In the spring of 2015, both the Vermont House and the New York Assembly resoundingly passed bills banning microbeads but in both states the Senate failed to act. Let your legislators know that you support a ban on plastic microbeads in personal care products and over-the-counter drugs and want them to work for passage of strong legislation when the Legislature reconvenes.

- In Vermont go to <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/findMyMember.cfm>
- In New York go to <http://www.nysenate.gov/senators> to find your Senator and <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/search/> to find your Assembly member

Be an informed consumer

There are plenty of effective soaps, toothpastes and body scrubs on the market that don't use plastics as cleaning agents. Check ingredients lists carefully and avoid products with "polyethylene" or "polypropylene" or "polyolefin".

