

Microfibre Fact File



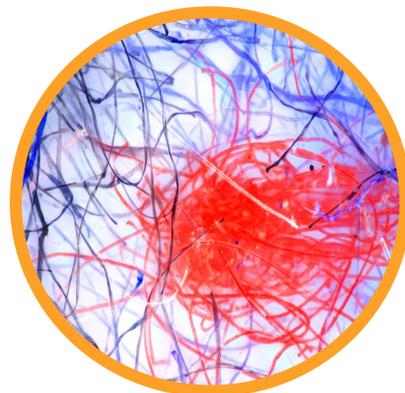
The problem

Our clothes are made of millions of tiny fibres. Often these are synthetic (non-natural) materials like polyester, nylon or acrylic, which are made from plastic fibres. With every wash and wear, these microfibrils shed from our clothes.

- A single wash can release over 700,000 microfibrils, and it's estimated that every week in the UK 9.4 trillion fibres are released from washing clothes (1)
- The fibres enter wastewater through drains, and many are then released into rivers and ultimately our ocean
- Sewage sludge from our waste water treatment plants (that's where your waste water goes when you flush your toilet!) contains microfibrils. This is a valuable source of nutrients for farmers as a soil fertiliser, but it contains microfibrils captured from our wastewater. Rainwater can then wash these fibres off of fields into rivers and ultimately the ocean
- 35% of primary microplastics found in the environment come from washing synthetic clothes (2)
- Once in the ocean, animals can ingest microfibrils and the plastic can then build up in the food chain over time. Microplastics have been found in many types of seafood we eat, including clams, mussels, fish and shrimp. One study found 63% of shrimp in the North Sea contained synthetic fibres! (3)



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The solution

What businesses can do

Clothes shed microfibrils most during the first few washes, which includes washing done during manufacturing of clothes. We want to see commercial business such as manufacturers, laundrettes and hotels fit microfibre filters on existing washing machines.

What the government can do

We're asking the UK Government to bring in legislation that requires new washing machines to contain microfibre filters.

What you can do

- Sign our petition to [#StopOceanThreads](#) asking governments to change legislation on washing machine filters
- Check clothing labels. The worst microplastic-shedding fabrics are polyester, fleece and nylon. Choose clothes made from as near to 100% natural materials as possible
- Reduce fast fashion consumption. It's estimated that we are buying 60% more clothes than we were in 2000. To reduce how much you buy, repair clothes that break, shop second-hand and swap clothes with friends and family (4)
- Wash clothes less. If you're wearing a top for a few hours, or a fleece for a few days, they probably don't need a wash – just hang them up to air out
- Use liquid detergent instead of abrasive washing powder, as this loosens more microfibrils, and use fabric softener. Fabric softener has been found to reduce the number of fibres shed by more than 35% (5)
- Wash at lower temperatures, shorter cycles and in full loads.