

GET THE FACTS: MICROBEADS

MICROBEADS

Microbeads are made out of plastic (polyethylene) and found in cosmetics and hygiene products. Microbeads have been found in body scrubs and face wash used for exfoliation. They are small, solid manufactured plastic particles that are less than 5 millimeters and don't degrade or dissolve in water.

WHY ARE THEY DANGEROUS?

Microbeads are so small that they wash down drains unchanged. Aquatic animals then consume microbeads which also attract harmful metals. Once consumed by an animal they travel up the food chain and can be consumed by humans.

SOLUTIONS

In December of 2015, Congress passed the **“Microbead-Free Waters Act”** which bans the production, packaging, and distribution of rinse off, non-prescription cosmetics containing plastic microbeads. The ban was rolled out between 2017 and 2019 with different deadlines to stop manufacturing and introduction and delivery into interstate commerce. By July 1, 2019 the sale and distribution of all products containing microbeads should have ceased.

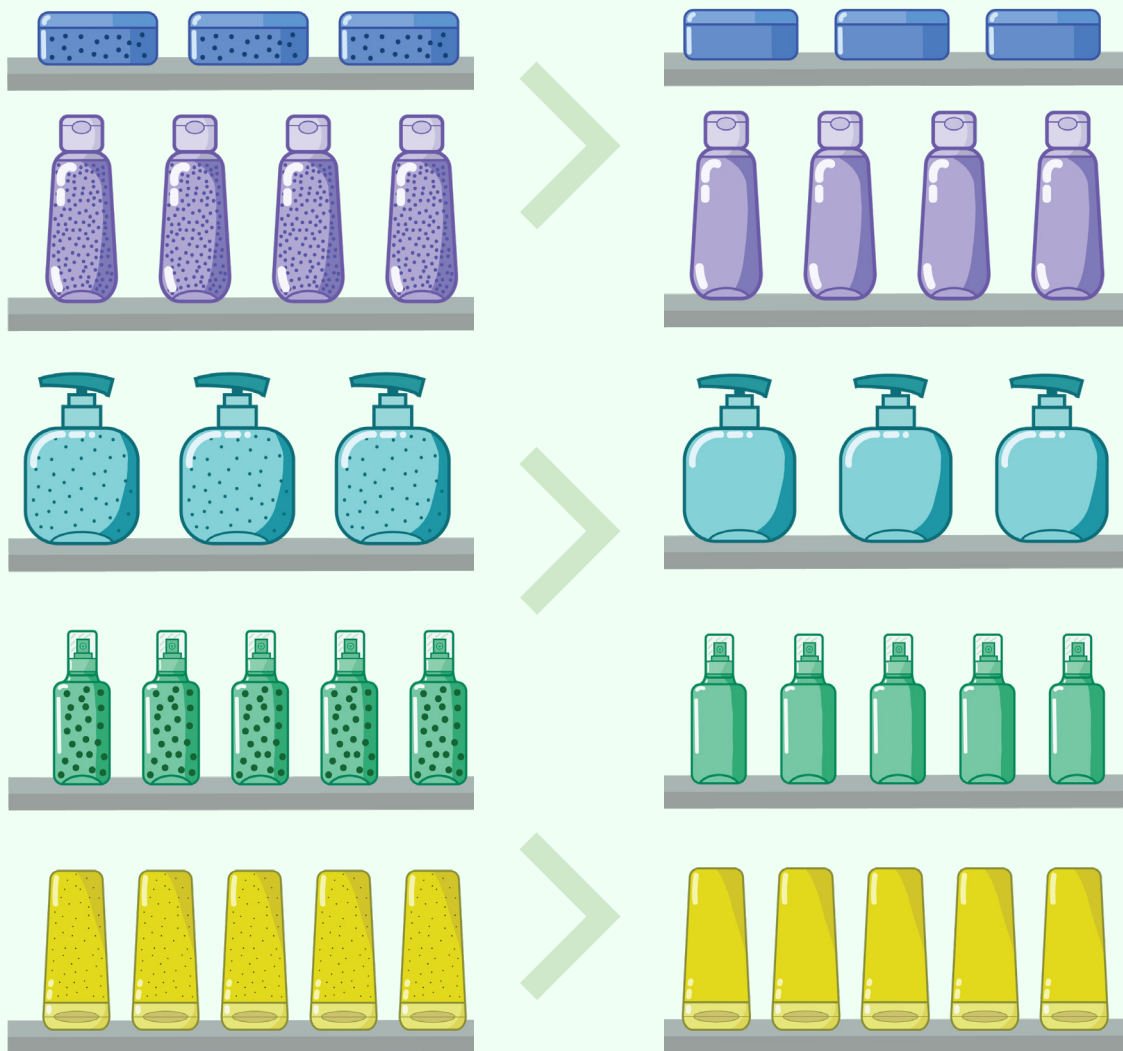


WHAT WE CAN DO

Products made before 2017 are likely to contain these microbeads, as well as cosmetic products that may have been obtained outside the USA. When purchasing cosmetic items, look at the ingredients and check for polyethylene.

The Free Waters Act of 2015 banned polyethylene microbeads.
They are still found in products today.

Purchasing products **without** microbeads
is key to helping the planet.



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Illustrator: Joanna Levin

5 Gyres: Science to Solutions, 5gyres.org/microbeads
United States: Food & Drug Administration, fda.gov/cosmetics/cosmetics-laws-regulations/microbead-free-waters-act-faqs
Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Municipal-Wastewater/Microbeads
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration: Microplastics, response.restoration.noaa.gov/about/media/search-microplastics-face-scrubs-sea.html

SOURCES:

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fda.gov/cosmetics/cosmetics-laws-regulations/microbead-free-waters-act-faqs

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