

Unilever's position on: Microplastics

Microplastics are tiny pieces of plastic which can end up in the ocean, causing potential damage to the environment. Most come from the breakdown of larger plastics in the ocean, but some can come from their use in consumer and industrial products.

Background

There is currently no single agreed definition of microplastics. In line with guidance from various expert organisations, we consider microplastics to be solid, water insoluble and non-biodegradable plastic particles up to five millimetres in diameter. These particles originate from a variety of different sources with the majority coming from the breakdown of larger plastic materials in water (e.g. plastic bags, bottles and tyres), as well as the shedding of synthetic fibres from textiles during clothes washing, and from the use of solid plastic scrub beads or other microplastics in a range of consumer and industrial products.

Protecting our planet

We recognise there is growing concern on the potential environmental impact of microplastics, especially when they end up in our ocean. That's why we are always innovating and looking for ways to improve our packaging and formulations to ensure we protect the planet and our fragile aquatic ecosystems.

Our progress and ambition

Our journey started in 2014, when we were one of the first companies to stop using small [plastic scrub beads](#). These were used in a small number of our beauty and personal care products because of their ability to gently remove dead skin cells from the surface of the skin. We now use alternative exfoliating ingredients such as apricot kernels, cornmeal, ground pumice, silica and walnut shells.

Six years on, and as part of our [commitment to fighting climate change and protecting nature](#), we are now focusing on making our formulations biodegradable by 2030.

As part of this, we are in the process of removing other solid polymers which are slow to biodegrade and replacing them with natural or biodegradable alternatives across our home, beauty and personal care products. This includes:

- Fragrance encapsulates: are microscopic capsules which help use less fragrance ingredients in products, while still providing long lasting freshness. We have already replaced the encapsulates used in our deodorant products with a biodegradable alternative and we are working hard towards only using biodegradable fragrance encapsulates across all our home, beauty and personal care products.

- Opacifiers: help to give products a creamy white appearance and are used in some of our skin cleansing, deodorant and hair care products and in some of our liquid laundry detergents. We are removing non-biodegradable opacifiers from all our products and for some products are replacing them with a biodegradable alternative.