

Tea Bags Serve a Side of Microplastics As Well

It might be time to switch to loose leaf tea.

A study from researchers at McGill University in Canada has found that a single tea bag releases 11.6 billion microplastic particles and 3.1 billion smaller nano plastic particles. Those numbers are much higher than the amounts of plastics measured previously in other foods and beverages.

Researchers tested 4 different types of plastic commercial tea bags by cutting them open, washing them, and steeping them in almost-boiling water for 5 minutes. Researchers then analyzed the tea bags and their particles using electron microscopes and spectroscopy.

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The Canadian team tested the potential toxicity of the microparticles released from the tea bags by exposing water fleas to the contaminated water, finding the particles had behavioural effects and developmental malformations on the fleas.

Milk? Sugar? Microplastics? Some tea bags found to shed billions of particles

Teabags were commonly made out of natural fibers and many still are, however many tea bags made out of natural fibers are sealed with plastic. It's becoming more and more common for teabags to be made out of heat-safe plastics. These are most common in the pyramid-shaped tea bags that tend to be a bit more heavy-duty.

Microplastics are tiny pieces of plastics less than five

millimeters long. Microplastics are the most prevalent type of marine debris, and can also be found in the rain, the wind, and even inside our own bodies. Microplastics come off of our clothes, plastic bottle fragments, cigarette filters, beauty products, and many other plastic materials. The particles then breakdown into nano-plastics, even smaller particles of plastic.

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The effects of microplastics on human health are largely unknown due to a lack of research. That being said, plastic is toxic and has been proven to cause cancer. Microplastics are everywhere, and we really have no way to filter them at this point. Check out this article to learn more about plastic toxicity and how to detox from it, and other endocrine system disruptors.

For alternatives to tea bags, try compostable tea bags, loose leaf tea, or metal reusable tea ball strainers.