Thousands of Pounds of Disposable Masks Are Ending up in Our Oceans

On September 16th, scuba divers found more than 3,000 pounds of trash at Rushikonda beach in India. Divers were on their first underwater clean-up since quarantine began when they found 3,300 pounds of N-95 masks, gloves, and other bio-medical waste floating in the seabed. The trash was removed over three rounds of ocean clean up ending on September 27th.

According to the World Health Organization, the world needs 89 million medical masks a month. Disposable masks take hundreds of years to break down and are now being used more than ever.

> *Before COVID-19, a government hospital bed would generate around half a kg of biomedical waste per day which has now gone up to 3-5 kg (per day).*
>
> *Discarded single-use plastic masks and gloves are choking ocean beds*

The pandemic has done extensive damage to the environment in recent months. Disposable masks frequently get wrapped up in wildlife. The amount of PPE that we dispose of is adding to an ever-growing pile of plastic in our oceans and landfills. The world has made a quick shift away from reusable products back to disposable products, for the sake of human health. That being said, the health of the planet and its animals cannot be forgotten, as it is likely what got us into this pandemic in the first place.

If you have to wear a mask, please use a reusable one. If you ever find yourself with a disposable one, when it comes time to throw it away, cut the strings off the mask to prevent it

from getting wrapped up in the legs and fins of wildlife. More people are ordering things online than ever before. Keep in mind how much waste your package from amazon is generating. In an attempt to return to normal, many people have begun eating out again or ordering take-out from restaurants. Remember that you, the environment, and your wallet, are better off with a meal cooked at home. Be conscious of what you consume, and how, in a time where staying safe from COVID-19 has become more of a priority than taking care of the environment.