What are microplastics?

The term ‘microplastics’ does not refer to a specific type of plastic. Instead, it describes solid, insoluble plastic particles (polymers) smaller than five millimetres in size.
www.global2000.at/mikroplastik

Because of extensive media coverage and numerous publications, the issue of microplastics – and more general, plastic waste – has increasingly reached the public. Shocking images of dreamlike beaches buried in rubbish or large rotating plastic islands in our oceans have triggered widespread concern and disbelief. While these dramatic images show the visible side of the plastic crisis, microplastics remain a hidden danger.

Microplastics are partly made on purpose (for example, they are used in products like cosmetics, cleaning agents, and toothpaste). They are also created when plastic breaks down over time.
In both cases, tiny plastic particles enter the environment and our food chain. By now, microplastics have been found almost everywhere: in rivers, lakes, oceans, mountains, in fish and other animals – and even in the human body.
See for example: “Mikroplastik hat den menschlichen Körper erreicht” (2018): www.welt.de/gesundheit/article182537162/Mikroplastik-Kunststoffpartikel-erstmals-immenschlichen-Koerper-nachgewiesen.html

Microplastics are very small and hard to see with just your eyes. It is also very difficult to remove from rivers, oceans, or wastewater. Even modern wastewater treatment plants cannot get rid of all of them. This means that everyday things like detergents, clothes, and cosmetics release microplastic particles into our water every day.

In 2025, the Austrian Environment Agency tested soft drinks in the name of the Salzburg Chamber of Labour and found plastic particles of various kinds in 17 out of 20 beverages examined.
Source: https://salzburg.orf.at/stories/3298856

Besides the choices each person makes when buying things, it is also important that businesses, shops, and politicians act responsibly.

Some first ideas and steps have already started and are helping. Examples include new laws that reduce or ban single-use products, more reusable items being offered, and shops that completely avoid plastic packaging.

Everyone is needed and plays an significant role in helping to change direction. Only more sustainable consumption can really help to reduce the problem of microplastics in the future.

Notes

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