

Plastic, the not so good, the bad and the ugly;

It's exciting to be part of the health revolution rather than the sickness industry. It is about taking back control of your health and wellbeing instead of leaving it to your doctor or somebody else who does not know your body the way you know it. It is also being responsible not only for your own health and that of the family but the health of the planet as well. The latest statistics out of the US are frightening. If you choose to be in the sickness industry, that is relying on conventional medicine to look after you then your chances of survival are smaller than if you choose to take responsibility for your own health, through exercise, diet and lifestyle choices.

Let me explain more, the following statistics are from some recent research out of America; Australian and New Zealand statistics will be similar relatively.

- In a 1992 survey, a national pharmacy database found a total of 429,827 medication errors from 1,081 hospitals.
- In 1974, 2.4 million unnecessary surgeries were performed that resulted in 11,900 deaths compared to the year 2001, where 7.5 million unnecessary surgeries were performed resulting in 37,136 deaths.
- A 1998 study reported an estimated 106,000 deaths from prescription medications per year.
- Nearly 9 million people were unnecessarily hospitalized in 2001.

Scary stuff, if you read the second bullet point again you'll note that in 25 years the problem is getting worse not better, so don't wait another 25 years to get on track and find that your chances of being healthy are diminishing even more. Take control of your health, changing your habits to healthy sustainable habits. Following is a reminder not only for your own health but the health of the planet for future generations.

My son arrived home for school very excited, he had been given a project where he had to match minerals (aluminium, mica, mercury, silica, graphite and so on) to objects around the house. He found most of the matches but when it came to mercury he was perplexed. At that point I handed him a plastic container from the kitchen. He told me that plastic wasn't a mineral, but I explained to him that mercury is used as a catalyst in the production of a number of plastics. "But mummy" he said, "isn't mercury a poison"?

Plastics are by products of the petroleum industry, the boom in the plastics industry occurred post World War II and now they are used extensively in everyday life. Plastic can be found in the building industry, electronics, and health care system, in transport, the toy industry and within our kitchen, containing our food. Now you may think that that is not such a bad thing, but let me tell you that plastic has far reaching health effects that are only just surfacing with the latest research.

Plastics are not an inert material but rather a deadly cocktail of dangerous molecules known as phthalates infiltrating into everything they touch. The stabilisers used in the process of producing plastic are known to be carcinogenic and the phthalates are endocrine disruptors or xeno-oestrogens, a relative newly discovered phenomenon that is affecting every square inch of the planet, not just the food contained within the plastic.

These endocrine disruptors have been associated with the feminisation of nature, a situation that is changing the male female ratio in both the animal and human world. They have also been linked to the decrease in sperm rate along with the increase in testicular cancer rates and the ever increasing incidence of breast cancer to name but a few.

Other toxic chemicals released by plastic are less obvious but more insidious and the effects include a range of symptoms that are collectively called environmental illness, they can include symptoms ranging from headaches, nausea, joint pain, weakness, exhaustion, inability to think clearly, arrhythmia and muscle spasm. The effects of the plastic industry are far reaching, and despite the research and obvious effects there has been little done about changing the amount of plastic produced.

But I believe there is a way to decrease the amount of plastic in the world without violent protests or costly lobbying of parliament and that is; don't buy plastic or try to minimise the use of it. Can one person make a difference? Yes and collectively we can make a huge difference.

The kitchen is a great place to start. Begin in the pantry, now I am not suggesting to change over tomorrow, but to take some steps to reduce the plastic in the kitchen. Here are some things you can do to reduce plastic;

1. Find a food or drink that you buy weekly that is contained in a large glass jar, I found an organic yogurt (Hakea) that was contained in a large glass jar so slowly I changed all my pantry containers into glass, they look great too.
2. Whenever buying cheese and other deli items buy it at the delicatessen to avoid the excess plastic wrap.
3. Buy your meat from a butcher to avoid the excess packaging.
4. To avoid using plastic bags when shopping take calico bags. I use them for every shopping trip, whether for food or other items.
5. Go back to using glass mixing bowls.
6. Ensure your drinking and eating utensils are glass and crockery.
7. Use baby feeding bottles made from glass, not plastic. Heating plastic causes an increase leaching of phthalates.
8. Buy nuts and dried food in bulk rather than in small quantities.
9. Where possible choose glass or other containers over plastic when buying packaged foods.

10. When having takeaway (Thai or Chinese etc) take your pots and pans down to the food shop to be filled.

And what about the plastic foodwrap, how can you possibly live without it. You can. Become creative, go back to grease proof paper for wrapping sandwiches. Store leftovers in glass containers.

In this world it is impossible to eradicate plastic totally out of your life but by taking steps to reduce the amount of plastic used then you become the solution and no longer the problem.

If you want to learn more on this subject (plastics and there disastrous effects on health) I suggest you read two brilliant books. Our Stolen Future and The Feminisation of Nature