

Marine Litter Teacher's Notes



Microbeads

- What are microbeads?

Microbeads are tiny bits of plastic found in exfoliating body washes and facial scrubs. Since their introduction in 1972, they have made their way into more than 100 personal care products.

- Why have microbeads been banned in the UK?

They are tiny, colorful and harmless-looking, but these little pellets are being blamed for causing big problems for the world's oceans and seas.

- What products contain them?

Microbeads are manufactured for specific purposes, including for use in personal care products (such as scrubs, bath products, facial cleaners, toothpastes).

- What might manufacturers use instead of microbeads?

Salt scrubs are an abrasive alternative to microbead-filled beauty products.

How long do plastics last?

Plastic bottle 450 years

Foam buoy 50 years

Plastic drinks holder 400 years

Aluminum drinks can 200 years

Plastic bag 10 – 20 years

Fishing line 600 years

Waxed carton (something like an orange juice or milk carton) 3 months

Polystyrene cup 50 years

It is worth pointing out to the pupils that this is how long it takes to break down – not to disappear. Plastic is just as damaging, if not more so when it is in small pieces.