

## ECO-CYCLE'S POCKET GUIDE TO PLASTICS

### AVOIDING PLASTIC BEATS RECYCLING PLASTIC!

While a number of plastics are now recyclable, Eco-Cycle encourages you to avoid plastic and single-use packaging as much as possible—in the past 45 years, it's increased more than 10,000%! Simply recycling this packaging does not negate the environmental damage done when the resource is extracted or when the plastic is manufactured. See the reverse side of this guide to see which plastics are more problematic than others, both in manufacture and in use.

### ALL PLASTICS CAN LEACH CHEMICALS UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS

Avoid subjecting plastic containers to high temperatures (like in the microwave or dishwasher, from hot food or drink, or from direct sun).

"Microwave safe" simply indicates the plastic won't melt in the microwave, not that it won't leach chemicals.

Avoid using harsh detergents to clean plastics to prevent releasing additional chemicals.

### REUSABLE ALTERNATIVES

For safer alternatives, use resealable glass containers to store and heat food, a stainless steel "to-go" coffee cup instead of plastic, and for water bottles, try a stainless steel bottle.



303.444.6634 • [ecocycle.org](http://ecocycle.org)

## ECO-CYCLE'S POCKET GUIDE TO PLASTICS

### PLASTICS TO AVOID:



PVC, or polyvinyl chloride, is commonly considered the most damaging of all plastics. It releases carcinogenic dioxins into the environment when manufactured or incinerated and can leach phthalates with use.



You'll find this code on your foam, or polystyrene, cups and "to go" boxes, as well as some clear cups and containers. Polystyrene can leach styrene, a possible human carcinogen.



PC, or polycarbonate, can potentially leach bisphenol-A, a known hormone disrupter. PC is NOT to be confused with #7 PLA. See right.



### SAFER PLASTICS:

PETE, or polyethylene terephthalate, is considered among the safest plastics, though some studies do indicate that repeated use of the same PETE bottle or container could cause leaching of DEHP, an endocrine-disrupting phthalate and probable human carcinogen.



Some reusable sports bottles are a #2 (high-density polyethylene), and these are far preferable to the #7 versions.



Low-density polyethylene and polypropylene are considered reasonably safe.



PLA, or polylactic acid, is a safe, biodegradable, compostable (not recyclable) plastic made from plants. Make sure your item is certified by BPI before composting.