

Just Say No, Thank You.

Ironically, while many of us are spending more time and money to eat the healthiest and most sustainably produced foods that we can find and afford, we frequently overlook the packaging in which this food is found. Shouldn't our food packaging be just as good for our health and the planet as the actual food? We think so.

Tips for Reducing Your Contact with the Harmful Chemicals in Food Packaging

AVOID POLYSTYRENE #6

Most plastics have a triangle identifier on them that identifies the plastic type. If you buy a cup of coffee, and it's Styrofoam, that's Polystyrene #6. If the plastic lid says #6, that's also polystyrene. Bring your own coffee cup and/or skip the lid. Ask the store if they would be willing to switch to another type of lid that's better for human health — and the environment.

AVOID BPA, BPB and BPS

Bisphenols, the chemicals that line many cans of food and are present in many plastics, are harmful to human health. Look for products that say BPA-free (but understand that they may contain other equally harmful bisphenols, like BPS and BPB, that haven't received the negative attention BPA has). Your best bet is to look for glass alternatives or TetraPaks, where available. If you're wedded to canned goods, look for Eden Foods, which has BPA-free cans.

SAY NO TO RECEIPTS

Bisphenols are also used on most receipts, which are printed on thermal paper with a process that employs heat (rather than ink). Unlike liners in cans, the bisphenols in this case (BPA or BPS) are not bound and the paper is coated with them. Both chemicals are easily absorbed through the skin and into the bloodstream, where they act like hormones.

AVOID PFAS (Perfluorinated Chemicals)

PFAS are used on paper plates, bowls, clamshells, and other kinds of food packaging to make them water and oil-resistant. Your pizza boxes, rotisserie chicken bag, bakery wrapper and take out container are all likely to contain PFAS. Uncoated paper products, and products made from materials other than paper, including bamboo, are good alternatives. Other ways to limit exposure: Eat at home! Visit Toxic Free Future for more information: <https://toxicfreefuture.org/key-issues/toxic-free-food/healthy-food-packaging/>



Tips for Use Less Plastic Food Packaging and Reducing Our Waste Stream

Reduce, refuse, and reuse are three ways we can reduce plastics in our environment. Reducing waste is perhaps the most important step we can take for a zero-plastic future.



Use Less Plastic in Your Kitchen: Reuse freebies, like bread bags or yogurt containers. Consider alternatives like beeswax wrappers, glassware with silicone lids, canning jars or simply a kitchen bowl with a plate placed on top. When hosting get-togethers, avoid plastic cutlery, plastic cups, and plastic plates or paper plates lined in PFAS.

Use Less Plastic While Dining Out or Getting Food to Go: If you need a straw, request a paper straw or bring a reusable metal straw with you. Carry a reusable coffee mug with you. If you forget your reusable cup and have to use a disposable one, skip the stirrer and recycle the lid (or skip the lid entirely). If ordering takeout, request that napkins, utensils, and single-use condiments not be included. Some delivery services offer customers an option to decline disposable items. If dining out and planning on taking leftovers home, bring your own container.

Use Less Plastic While Grocery Shopping: Bring reusable or cloth bags. If you forget, choose paper over plastic bags and make sure those paper bags end up in the paper recycling bin. Select fruits and vegetables from a bin, rather than those on styrofoam trays and shrink-wrapped in plastic. Avoid putting produce in plastic bags. Bring reusable bags for unpackaged produce or skip bagging produce altogether. Eat fewer processed foods, which tend to have more plastic packaging.

Shop at a Zero Waste Grocery Store: Some communities now have “zero waste” grocery stores. In many ways, they work like old-time grocers. You bring a container and fill it from a bin, or use a reusable container provided by the retailer. Litterless, a website with tips for zero waste living, has produced a helpful nation-wide zero-waste grocery shopping guide. The site also provides information about where to buy in bulk.

Read our report, *The FoodPrint of Food Packaging*: www.foodprint.org/reports/the-foodprint-of-food-packaging