You recognize the spongy stuff that makes up your takeout coffee cup. But did you know that your coffee cup lid might be the same type of plastic?

Pledge to REFUSE single-use polystyrene products!

5,195

* indicates required

Email Address *

I pledge to refuse single-use...

- [ ] Polystyrene and "Styrofoam"
- [ ] Plastics in general

Subscribe

What is Nix the 6?

Polystyrene products are everywhere, from coffee cup lids to straws, cutlery and cups (even SOLO cups). Expanded polystyrene foam—commonly known as "Styrofoam"—is basically polystyrene that's expanded with air. You can identify polystyrene and expanded polystyrene foam by the number "6" on the bottom of a product. In the United States, Dunkin' Donuts alone serves 2.7 million polystyrene coffee cups every day. When you Nix the 6, you pledge to *refuse* these single-use plastics.

Through our 2017 #foamfree Action Campaign, thousands of people pledged to refuse single-use polystyrene plastic. However, in many places “foam” is not recognized as polystyrene. In 2018, we rebranded our campaign as Nix the 6, accompanied by the #sneakystyrene hashtag.

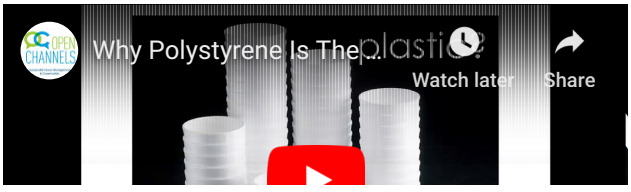
Why is polystyrene a problem?

Polystyrene and expanded polystyrene foam—better known as "Styrofoam"—are plastics made from styrene and benzene, two petroleum based chemicals. Styrene is recognized as a known animal carcinogen and found "reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen" by the National Toxicology Program and "probably carcinogenic to humans" by the International Agency for Research on Cancer; it is also listed as a carcinogen under California's Proposition 65 in 2016. "Possibly carcinogenic and should be investigated more closely." For forty years, this has been the conclusion of researchers who have been unsure of whether there is an increased risk of cancer associated with styrene. But now an impartial working group under the auspices of WHO and appointed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), has upgraded the warning. Styrene is upgraded from possibly carcinogenic to probably carcinogenic for humans, and the decision is largely based on register-based studies from Aarhus together with new animal evidence.

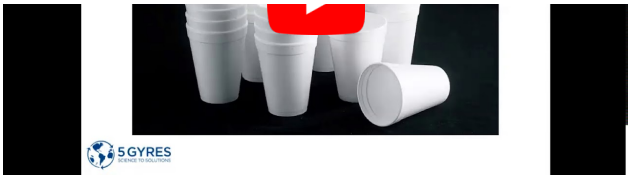
The EPA ranks polystyrene manufacturing as the fifth worst global industry in terms of hazardous waste creation. These plastics are difficult to recycle and are even banned from many recycling programs because of contamination programs. Although the polystyrene manufacturing industry reports that recycling rates of polystyrene are increasing, it is not cost effective because expanded polystyrene foam is so lightweight and bulky. In our 2016 Plastics Better Alternatives Now (BAN) List study, we found that polystyrene is one of the most common forms of plastic pollution in the environment.

Is it the new microbead?

We have seen firsthand how individual actions can snowball into massive change. Our 2012 study that discovered plastic microbeads in the Great Lakes inspired a movement, culminating with major corporate



phase out—including L'Oreal and Johnson & Johnson—and statewide bans on both coasts. In 2015, President Obama signed a federal microbeads ban into law, making them illegal nationwide!



Like microbeads, polystyrene plastics are environmental hazards. In the "New Plastics Economy" report produced by the World Economic Forum and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, leaders of 15 global brands—including Dow Chemical, Coca-Cola, L'Oreal, Unilever, and Procter & Gamble— recommended the phase-out of polystyrene.

With local polystyrene bans on ballots and a statewide ban being considered in California, this is the year to join the movement. We did it before with microbeads—now it's time for a polystyrene ban!

Okay, I'm convinced: Polystyrene is bad news. What can I do?

1. Take the "Nix the 6 pledge to refuse polystyrene products, then share these posts to promote this commitment to your community, encouraging others to join the movement.

Instagram

WE KNOW THAT STYRENE CAUSES CANCER IN ANIMALS, BUT HOW DOES IT AFFECT US? @5GYRES IS RESEARCHING THE EFFECTS OF POLYSTYRENE AND EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE FOAM--COMMONLY KNOWN AS STYROFOAM--ON OUR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT. WHAT'S THE FIRST STEP? PLEDGE TO REFUSE SINGLE-USE POLYSTYRENE PRODUCTS AT WWW.5GYRES.ORG/POLYSTYRENE. TOGETHER, WE CAN ELIMINATE #SNEAKYSTYRENE

Facebook

FRUSTRATED WITH OUR GOVERNMENT? CHANGE STARTS WITH YOUR VOICE! @5GYRES IS WORKING TO BRING YOU THE LATEST SCIENCE ON THE EFFECTS OF POLYSTYRENE ON OUR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT SO WE CAN BAN THIS TOXIC SUBSTANCE! FIND OUT HOW TO BEAT #SNEAKYSTYRENE AT WWW.5GYRES.ORG/POLYSTYRENE

Twitter

TOXIC POLYSTYRENE PLASTIC IS EVERYWHERE & WE JUST CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE! THE BEST WAY TO ELIMINATE #SNEAKYSTYRENE IS TO REFUSE IT: WWW.5GYRES.ORG/POLYSTYRENE

PLASTIC RESEARCHERS @5GYRES ARE DISCOVERING WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON WITH POLYSTYRENE AND EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE FOAM--BETTER KNOWN AS STYROFOAM--IN OUR OCEANS. DID YOU KNOW COFFEE CUP LIDS AND SOLO CUPS ARE ALSO POLYSTYRENE? THIS PLASTIC IS NOT RECYCLABLE, AND IT'S POLLUTING OUR OCEANS. GROSS! PLEDGE TO REFUSE #SNEAKYSTYRENE AT WWW.5GYRES.ORG/POLYSTYRENE

2. Check the map to find out where polystyrene bans have passed or are pending, then click to learn more about where you can get involved.

See those yellow, orange and red dots in the United States? That's where the plastics industry is fighting back by supporting preemptive legislation. Often proposed in areas where local municipalities are considering or have enacted plastic bag ordinances, preemptive laws—also known as the "ban on bans"—outlaw regulation of plastic "auxiliary containers," including polystyrene. Some even violate "home rule" provisions of state constitutions! Yellow means a preemptive law on plastic has been proposed, orange means it is in progress, and red means it has passed. Under these laws, municipalities lose their right to decide local issues—and individuals are denied the right to take action in their own communities.

Thanks to the Surfrider Foundation for contributing to our map!

3. Use your voice!

The single-most important thing you can do to support a polystyrene ban is to tell your representatives why this step is so important:

- Google "find my councilmember" and a link should pop up that directs how to do this in your city.
- Email, tweet or call your representative with a personal statement about why the polystyrene ban is important to

you.

- Share this statement at your neighborhood or city council meeting. This may sound daunting, but it's easy: Just walk in, fill out a speakers card, and wait until you're called. Your statement will typically be limited to two minutes. Feel free to use ours,

> *"My name is [NAME] and I live in [CITY] and am a [PROFESSION]. I want to talk to you today about polystyrene plastic. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans use 25 billion expanded polystyrene coffee cups each year—and many of their lids are polystyrene, too. Polysytrene products are everywhere, from coffee cup lids to straws, cutlery and cups (even SOLO cups). Expanded polystyrene foam—commonly known as "Styrofoam"—is basically polystyrene that's expanded with air. You can identify polystyrene and expanded polystyrene foam by the number '6' on the bottom of a product. These plastics are made from styrene, a known animal carcinogen that was found 'reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen' by the National Toxicology Program and 'probably carcinogenic to humans' by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. These plastics are difficult to recycle and are even banned from many recycling programs because of contamination programs: Less than 2% of polystyrene was recycled in 2013. And polystyrene is one of the most common forms of plastic pollution found in our environment. This is why I support a polystyrene ban in [CITY]. Even leaders of Dow Chemical, Coca-Cola, L'Oreal, Unilever, and Procter & Gamble have recommended the phase-out of polystyrene! Please join me in supporting a polystyrene ban to protect our health and our environment. Thank you!"*

4. Use these resources to help jumpstart a ban in your community.

DOWNLOAD PDF

5 GYRES POLYSTYRENE POLICY BRIEF

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SAMPLE POLYSTYRENE BAN CULVER CITY

Click here for an information page about the Culver City ban.

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SAMPLE POLYSTYRENE BAN MANHATTAN BEACH

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SAMPLE POLYSTYRENE BAN

MALIBU

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EQUINOX PROJECT GUIDE FOR POLYSTYRENE REDUCTION POLICIES

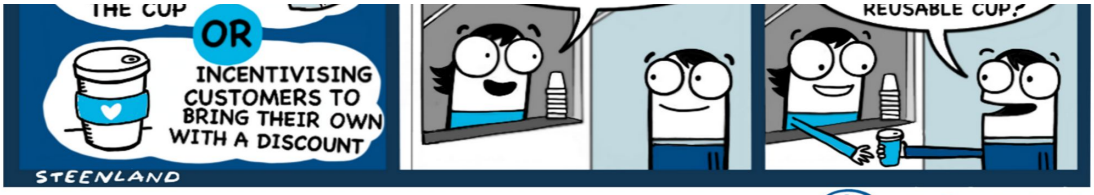
DOWNLOAD PDFS

POLYSTYRENE TOXICITY RESEARCH STUDIES

POLYSTYRENE FREE CAMPUS GUIDE

5. If you see polystyrene products in your favorite cafe, bar or restaurant, take a minute to talk to your server about eliminating them. You can also print and share our leave-behind flyer, if you're shy about striking up a

Nix the 6
#sneakystyrene
CAFE
MENU
HI!
HI!
DID YOU KNOW THESE CUPS ARE MADE FROM POLYSTYRENE?
NO, WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S KIND OF LIKE STYROFOAM, MINUS THE AIR.
OOOKAY...
IT'S PRETTY TOXIC STUFF.
GREAT. ARE YOU READY TO ORDER?
IT'S MADE FROM STYRENE, WHICH CAUSES CANCER IN ANIMALS.
AAND I CARE BECAUSE?
HUMANS ARE ANIMALS.
WELL THAT'S BOTH SCARY AND DEPRESSING.
BUT! THERE ARE A LOT OF COST-EFFECTIVE SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE NOW...
RECYCLED - AND RECYCLABLE OR EVEN COMPOSTABLE...
PLATES
BOXES
CUPS
EVEN LIDS!
SOME CAFES ARE STARTING PROGRAMS WHERE YOU...
PAY A DEPOSIT AND GET IT BACK WHEN YOU RETURN
COOL! I'LL ASK MY MANAGER ABOUT THOSE!
GREAT! I'D LOVE A COFFEE. CAN YOU PUT IT IN MY



www.5gyres.org/polystyrene

5 GYRES INSTITUTE

Art by 5 Gyres Ambassador Sarah Steenland

*A quick word about "affordable." Some polystyrene ban opponents cite that switching away from polystyrene to alternative products may be 100% more expensive, which sounds like a lot. By using a percentage, the real cost difference is often distorted and exaggerated. In reality, there may be less than a penny's difference: For example, if a polystyrene item costs 1 cent, and an alternative non-polystyrene item cost 2 cents, that's only a 1 cent difference—yet represents a 100% increase. Isn't it worth paying a little to stop polluting a lot?

6. Together we can eliminate #sneakystyrene.

These are simple steps we can take as individuals to pressure our local and national government agencies to change outdated policies and laws so that we leave a planet better than we found it for the next generation. All big changes started with a few small ones—join many quiet voices together and we roar.

Let's do this!

DOWNLOAD & PRINT THIS!

Thank you to our partners!

WANT TO PARTNER WITH US? CLICK HERE

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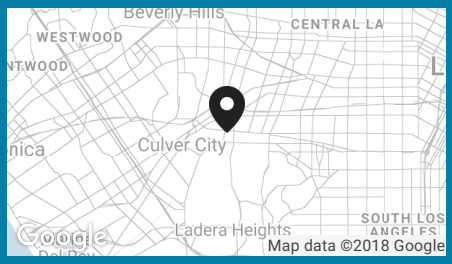

1% FOR THE PLANET

The 5 Gyre Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2017. Our mission is to empower action against the global health crisis of plastic pollution through science, education, and adventure.

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