

POLYSTYRENE FAST FACTS:

Polystyrene is made from petroleum, a non-sustainable, non-renewable, heavily polluting and fast-disappearing commodity.

The environmental impacts of polystyrene production in the categories of energy consumption, greenhouse gas effect, and total environmental effect ranks second highest, behind aluminum.¹

Polystyrene is a principle component of urban litter and marine debris. It is detrimental to wildlife that ingests it.

Polystyrene is not biodegradable. It takes several decades to hundreds of years for polystyrene to deteriorate in the environment or in a landfill.

Polystyrene takes up more space in landfills than paper, and will eventually re-enter the environment when water or mechanical forces breach landfills.³

Polystyrene contains the toxic substances Styrene and Benzene, suspected carcinogens and neurotoxins that are hazardous to humans.

Polystyrene food containers leach the toxin Styrene when they come into contact with warm food or drink, alcohol, oils and acidic foods causing human contamination and posing a health risk to people.¹

Over 100 US and Canadian, as well as some European and Asian cities, have banned polystyrene food packaging as a result of the negative impacts to humans and the environment.

HUMAN HEALTH IMPACTS OF POLYSTYRENE:

There are potential health impacts from polystyrene foam food packaging associated with its production, and with the leaching of some of its chemical components into food and drink. The general public is not typically warned of these public hazards.

Styrene, a component of polystyrene, is a known hazardous substance that medical evidence and the US Food and Drug Administration suggests leaches from polystyrene containers into food and drink. Polystyrene food containers leach Styrene when they come into contact with warm food or drink, alcohol, oils and acidic foods causing human contamination and posing a direct health risk to people.¹ It is for this reason that it is not recommended that plastic take-out containers ever be heated in a microwave.

Several adverse health effects have been attributed to styrene. Some studies have concluded that at exposure levels above 100 parts per million, humans experience acute mucous membrane irritation with the eyes, nose, and throat particularly affected. Increased levels of styrene concentration may cause fatigue, irritation, and decrease in concentration ability.³ Styrene has been linked to increased levels of chromosomal damage, abnormal pulmonary function and cancer in workers at polystyrene and styrene plants.⁴