

DO CLOTHES MAKE US SICK? FASHION, FIBERS AND HUMAN HEALTH

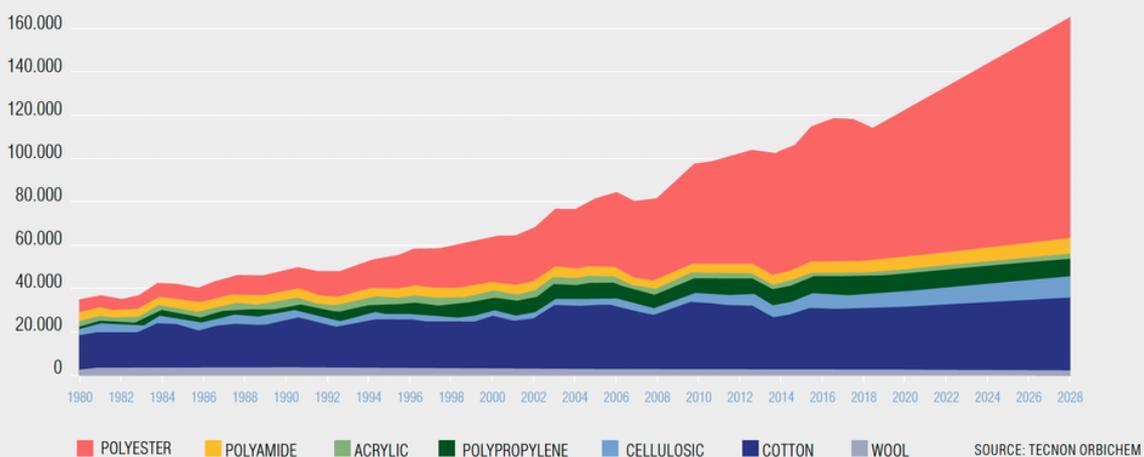


The textile and fashion industry is one of the largest polluters in the world. Almost 70% of all clothes and textiles used for sofas, curtains, and carpets are made of plastic materials (such as polyester, nylon, and acrylic). During production, use and or washing, they constantly shed almost invisible pieces of plastic. These particles are known as microplastic fibres.

Microfibres end up in our air, water, and the food chain. The long-term effects are unclear, but the amount of scientific evidence that microfibers form a health risk is growing rapidly. Microplastic fibres spread through the atmosphere and are found even in the remotest parts of the earth. Almost every person in the world (99 per cent of the population) breathes in air that is too polluted, according to the World Health Organisation.

Plastic microfibres are everywhere. Dust, indoor and outdoor, contains plastic fibres. The concentration is especially high indoors: around 30 per cent of all dust inside buildings consists of plastic particles. We are exposed to microfibres almost continuously.

GLOBAL FIBRE PRODUCTION INCREASE SINCE 1980 (THOUSAND METRIC TONNES)



Once inhaled, microfibrils end up in our lungs where they can cause chronic inflammation. This in turn may result in severe illnesses like cancer, heart disease, asthma, or diabetes. Inhaled particles can reach the liver, heart, kidneys, brain, and even the foetus!

Microplastic fibres are also found in our food and drinks. They enter our digestive system and cause problems like intestinal inflammation. There's a clear relationship between high exposure to microplastic fibres and two types of irritable bowel disease (called Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis).



Children under 6 months of age inhale twice the amount of plastic fibres and ingest twelve times more than adults because they often bring their hands to their mouths and spend time on the floor. Microfibrils can be especially harmful during the early development of a child.

Another concern is that microplastics transport and transmits germs or pathogens that latch onto them in seawater. Fish and shellfish ingesting these fibres can make the people who eat them sick. Toxic chemicals added to the yarns for colour or waterproofing can separate from the microfibrils inside the body and interfere with our hormones.

This report offers recommendations for the fashion industry and the European Commission. The industry needs to take drastic steps to reduce the amount of plastic pollution from the clothes and other textiles they produce. Policymakers have to start holding manufacturers accountable.

Do our clothes make us sick? We can't be 100% certain yet. But scientific evidence is growing: the amount of microplastic fibres that we are exposed to is extremely worrisome. Therefore, it is profoundly important to reduce the release of microplastic fibres at the source. Manufacturers should change their production process. We don't need more proof, we need less microplastic pollution, now!

[Read the full report](#)

MICROPLASTICS AND HUMAN HEALTH

