



A Mini-Guide to Plastic Bottles



"Winning with Wellness"

Plastics have become such a pervasive part of our daily lives that it can be difficult to do without them, even when we are concerned about their safety. But most of the plastic bottles and containers we use carry a recycling symbol that can be a help in deciding how to use them.

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You've been hearing all kinds of bad news reports about toxic chemicals leaching from plastic bottles and containers. If you heat these bottles or re-use them, you might be increasing your exposure to hormone mimics or any of a number of other chemicals. But plastic is all around us, and not all of it is hazardous to your family's health. How do you know which types of plastics are worse, and which are not as bad? One clue is the number inside the recycling symbol on the bottom of the bottles or containers. The numbers indicate which are accepted by recyclers, but they also indicate the class of plastic and its chemical characteristics:

- No. 1 PETE or PET (polyethylene terephthalate)
- No. 2 HDPE (high density polyethylene)
- No. 3. V (vinyl) or PVC
- No. 4. LDPE (low density polyethylene)
- No. 5. PP (polypropylene)
- No. 6. PS (polystyrene)
- No. 7. Other or miscellaneous

To sum up, if the bottle has the number 1, 2, 4, or 5 on the bottom, it's made from one of the safer plastics. If the number says 3, 6, or 7, there is a greater likelihood that the bottle will be leaving a chemical residue in your beverage. Category No. 3, PVC or polyvinyl chloride, is the worst, followed by No. 7, which may contain polycarbonates (bisphenol-A).

Another rule of thumb is that the softer the plastic the more likely that leaching can occur. You can also use your nose. If you sniff a hint of plastic, find another container. Of course, your best bet is to avoid plastics for food and beverage altogether, and use glass, metal, or ceramic refillable containers whenever possible.

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