1440

In partnership with Fidelity Investments

Sunday, August 24, 2025

Microplastics, explained

Microplastics, or MPs, are tiny plastic particles less than five millimeters long and have become one of Earth's most widespread pollutants. Like synthetic plastics, MPs are mostly made of long chains of hydrogen and carbon atoms, formed by linking byproducts of refining crude oil and natural gas (**watch explainer**). Other chemical additives may be incorporated to modify the final product's properties.

Primary MPs, such as microbeads commonly found in exfoliating cosmetic products, are intentionally manufactured to be small. Secondary MPs, like those released while washing synthetic textiles, form from the breakdown of larger plastics and make up the bulk of MPs in the environment (**learn why plastic doesn't biodegrade**).

As of 2024, the FDA claims there is **insufficient evidence** that MPs pose any human health risk, though initial biochemical studies have linked them to inflammation and hormone disruption.

… Read our full **explainer on microplastics here**.

Also, check out …

> Microplastics are everywhere on Earth—even Mount Everest. (**More**)

> Locating where microplastics are concentrated in the human body. (**More**)

> The plastic designed to dissolve in saltwater. (**More**)

Rockefellers

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Overview

High-level overview + an in-depth write-up on Rockefellers (est 5-min read) Expand to read

1440 Findings

Everything we've found while researching this topic

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Henry Ford built a plastic car from soybeans in 1941

To pursue his goal of marrying industry with agriculture, among other reasons, the automobile giant oversaw the design and creation of a vehicle with 12 panels made from plastic. At 2,000 pounds, the car was much lighter than all-steel ones, but production stopped during World War II.

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How John D. Rockefeller became the world's first billionaire

From a young age, John D. Rockefeller knew he was interested in business. His worked as a bookkeeper and sold candy prior to starting the business empire that would help cement the Rockefeller name in history: Standard Oil.

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John D. Rockefeller's father was a well-known con artist

John D. Rockefeller was born to a man known as "Devil Bill" who made a living posing as a traveling doctor, selling fake herbal cures, and was also infamous for his storytelling and cons.

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A timeline of the Rockefeller family

The Rockefeller family timeline (as it relates to the business world, at least) starts in 1839 with John D. Rockefeller's birth. In the nearly 200 years since, his offspring have gotten involved in everything from the Watergate scandal to the McCormick spice business.

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The Rockefellers funded the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg

John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his wife spent millions of dollars restoring Colonial Williamsburg and turning it into the tourist attraction it is today. You can go back in time pre-restoration to see before and after video footage.

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Today's Rockefellers have become climate activists

The Rockefeller Family Fund has been engaged in more than 40 lawsuits against ExxonMobil, a company that John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil created.

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How famed investigative journalist Ida Tarbell took on Standard Oil

After watching her father lose his oil refining business to Standard Oil, Ida Tarbell began to focus on unfair business practices in the US, writing a series on the oil giant's transgressions.

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See Rockefeller Center's Christmas trees since 1931

In 1931, with construction still underway, Rockefeller Center's very first Christmas tree was erected out front. John D. Rockefeller himself greeted the construction workers who put up the first 20-foot tree and decorated it with cranberries and paper garland.

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Rockefeller heir Rebekah Harkness served as inspiration for Taylor Swift

In 2020, Taylor Swift wrote a song that highlighted her similarities to Rebekah Harkness, the former owner of Swift's Rhode Island beach house. Harkness filled the Rhode Island home's pool with Champagne, courtesy of her late husband, a Standard Oil heir.

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Modern antitrust law was created to combat the Standard Oil Trust

John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Trust allowed him to dodge laws against one corporation buying stock in another. His centralized board of directors held stock in many different oil companies under his control, allowing Rockefeller to eventually monopolize the oil refining industry.

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Author John Green explains the Gilded Age

The Gilded Age was a time period that stretched from the 1870s until the turn of the 20th century that was colored by rapid industrialization, economic change, and widespread financial inequality. It was called the "gilded" age because the widespread poverty during this era is often overshadowed by the fact that it was also a "golden age" for wealthy individuals.

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