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KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Microplastics are found all over the world and people are constantly exposed to them through food, drinking, or breathing. Because humans ingest microplastics, it is not surprising that they are also found, for example, in our excrement and our blood. Possible health risks to the human body are in the early phases of investigation. There are strong indications of potential health risks, but there are still many uncertainties and knowledge gaps

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an average of twenty particles. A total of nine different types of plastic were found, the most common being polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) that are widely used for packaging. If we ingest microplastics, it is logical that we also find them in our excrement. The question that the researchers could not answer was whether any of the ingested microplastics remain in the body. It is known that the smallest particles can pass through the intestinal wall and end up in our tissue and bloodstream. There, they could be responsible for causing tiny inflammations.

PLASTIC THROUGH THE SKIN AND INTO THE BLOOD?

One of the most pressing questions is whether very small particles can also pass through the skin. The Plastic Soup Foundation arranged for some personal care products to be tested by the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, including Olay anti-wrinkle SPF 15 day cream. One 50 ml jar of day cream contained an estimated 1.48 million polyethylene (PE) particles. The diameter of the particles varied between 1.6 and 103 micrometers (μm). Every time you use this anti-wrinkle cream, you rub approximately 90,000 plastic particles onto your face. Personal care products are extensively tested for safety and human skin does protect our body extremely well. However, we do not know to what extent these microplastics pass through the skin and whether they eventually have a harmful effect. In fact, the diagram below shows that microplastics that were found in the Olay cream can potentially reach our blood and organs.

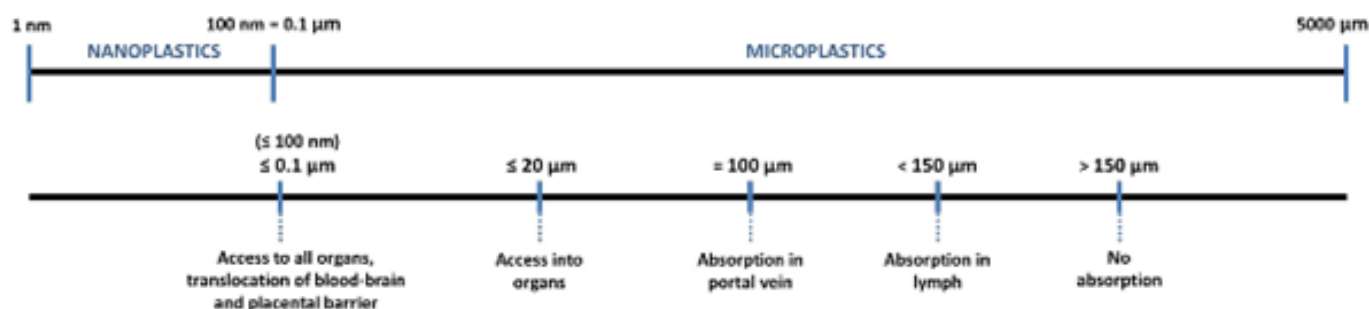


Fig. 1. Fate of micro- and nanoplastics in mammalian bodies (adapted from Lusher et al., 2017).

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PATHOGENS



What effects does plastic have on the human body and how can we prevent it from entering our bodies in the first place?

provides the perfect ground for bacteria and viruses to develop.

We are constantly exposed to plastic, its chemicals and endocrine-disruptors such as BPA, but what are the consequences on our health?

Plastic is everywhere in our food, in our drinking water, and the air we breathe. But what are the health consequences of this exposure?

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