

Microplastics & Microfibers in Water

Recent national media coverage has highlighted the issue of microfibers and microplastics found in some water samples. Because of these stories, the public may have questions regarding the possible presence of microplastics in local water supplies.

What are Microplastics and Microfibers?

- Microplastics are defined as plastic particles under 5 millimeters (mm). Some plastic is manufactured as microplastics (e.g., microbeads) and washed down drains, while larger plastic debris degrades into micro-sized particles over time with exposure to sun and water.
- Microfibers, a type of microplastics, are derived from synthetic textiles and slough off during daily use and machine washing of clothing (such as fleece jackets). Upwards of 60 percent of all clothing is now made of synthetic materials and polyester is the most popular. These fibers get into wastewater every time you wash your clothes. Most microfibers released in water are between 0.1–0.8 mm in size.

What You Need to Know

- **Drinking water provided by Columbia Water is in full compliance with all current federal and state regulations.** Columbia Water is consistently striving to implement better technologies for treating water. That is why we help fund research through such organizations as the Water Research Foundation and American Water Works Association.
- **There are no known health effects associated with microplastics.** This is an emerging issue and the EPA doesn't currently regulate it or have standardized methods developed for testing in water supplies.
- Nationwide studies have shown that the vast majority of water bodies and associated drinking water have detectable levels of microplastics.
- Columbia Water encourages everyone to do their part in preventing plastics from entering the environment. Using refillable water bottles when possible and recycling single use plastic are two great ways to help reduce plastic in our rivers and streams.

More information about microplastics and microfibers can be found on the Water Research Foundation's website at www.waterrf.org.

