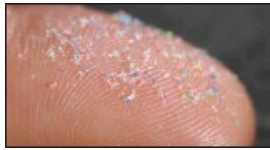


## Microplastics found in human blood

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Tiny bits of non-biodegradable plastic litter the planet, from the heights of Mount Everest to the depths of the Mariana Trench. Now, for the first time, scientists have found these microplastics in human blood, reports The Guardian (U.K.). Researchers analyzed blood samples from 22 healthy adults and found plastic particles in 17 of them. Half the samples had the PET plastic commonly used in water bottles; a third contained polystyrene, used in food packaging; and a quarter had polyethylene, the plastic in grocery bags. The discovery shows that the particles—some of them 140 times smaller than the width of a hair—can travel around the body. “It is certainly reasonable to be concerned,” says study author Dick Vethaak, from



Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands. “Where is it going in your body? Can it be eliminated? Excreted? Or is it retained in certain organs?” It’s unclear what impact the microplastics inside us have on our health. In laboratory experiments, though, they have been shown to cause damage to human cells, and air pollution particles inhaled into the lungs cause millions of early deaths a year. Researchers also aren’t sure how microplastics enter the bloodstream. Vethaak says they may come through food or water, or possibly from personal care products—such as toothpaste or lip gloss—that are accidentally ingested, or from dental polymers, or even tattoo ink.