

## **Say NO to plastics!**

### **How can my use and disposal of plastic threaten human health and the environment?**

- Plastic production, use, and disposal leads to plastic and its toxins in the environment, and plastic debris of all sizes in the waste stream.
- Recent research demonstrated significant levels of microplastics in food products, bottled water and other beverages, which is an important concern for human health and the environment.
- Some plastic materials, especially when heated or burned, leach or release endocrine disruptors and other toxins such as BPA and phthalates that have been found in human blood, urine, and breastmilk, and are associated with diabetes and other chronic disease.
- Studies show that bottled water also includes microbes, sometimes more than tap water.

### **Which plastic is *better* and how?**

**Resin Identification Code (RIC 1-7):** RICs identify the type of resin used in the plastic. RICs are found at the bottom or side of plastic products encased by the recycling symbol or a triangle. RICs denote the properties and help distinguish plastic that could be repurposed, recycled, or needs to be discarded. **In Puerto Rico, the only plastics collected and processed for recycling are types (1) and (2).** Single-use plastic cups, plates, straws, bags, or styrofoam materials are not recycled.

	PET, PETE	Polyethylene terephthalate	Considered safe, recyclable, but not meant to be re-used Ex. water/soda bottles, condiment or produce containers
	HDPE	High-density polyethylene	Low risk, BPA free, recyclable, releases estrogenic chemicals Ex. shopping bags, milk bottles, product containers
	PVC uPVC	Polyvinyl chloride	Soft or rigid, contains phthalates, endocrine disruptors Ex. plumbing pipes, garden hoses, deli wraps
	LDPE	Low-density polyethylene	Low hazard, BPA free, but releases estrogenic chemicals Ex. garbage bags/bins, liners, cling films, food containers,
	PP	Polypropylene	Heat resistant, less likely to leach, recommended for reuse Ex. appliances, toys, furniture, crates, films, containers
	PS	Polystyrene	Styrofoam, harmful when heated, related to cancer and nerve damage Ex. packaging, coat hangers, medical disposables, foam containers
	Other	Heterogeneous	Varying properties depending on constituents Ex. Furniture, medical parts, acrylics, nylon, polycarbonate

### **What can *you* do to reduce your plastic footprint, and improve your health and the environment?**

- Reduce single use plastics: (1) Avoid accepting or buying items that include single-use-plastics in any form (e.g. bottles, cups, glasses, straws, stirrers, bags, etc.). (2) Carry/demand alternatives and raise awareness. (3) Bring your own reusable containers to carry consumable goods, including food and water, if the place where you eat or drink doesn't provide reusable or biodegradable alternatives. (4) Find safe alternatives to bottled water.
- Reuse existing plastic: (1) Choose reusable plastic over single use. (2) Find innovative ways to reuse plastic you already have. (3) Donate plastic items so they can be reused.
- Recycle: (1) If you do not have alternatives to single-use plastic available such as biodegradable options, use plastics that you can appropriately dispose for recycling. (2) If the plastic product is recyclable, any possible caps, covers and/or labels need to be removed, and the plastic needs to be rinsed out or washed and emptied if it has any residue to enable recycling. (3) Follow the recycling program available in your community and workplace. If there isn't one, become a leader, contact your local representatives and establish a recycling program.

***Spread the message and inspire others!***