

## PAPER DETAILS

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# The Increasing Threat of Microplastics to Human Health

## Mikroplastiklerin İnsan Sağlığına Yönelik Artan Tehdidi

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To the Editor,

I am writing to contribute an article addressing the emerging and critical issue of microplastics, which have become a pervasive environmental pollutant with significant implications for human health and disease. This article aims to highlight the effects of microplastics on human health and draw attention to the need for further research in this area. The increasing presence of microplastics in the environment is one of our time's most pressing, yet underrecognized, global health concerns. Microplastics are small plastic particles less than 5 millimeters in size. These microplastics, formed due to fragmentation, are pollutants in nature<sup>1,2</sup>. The spread of microplastics has reached an alarming level of potential health risks and necessitates research on their health effects.

Recent studies have shown that microplastics can be found naturally in aquatic ecosystems and enter the bodies of living organisms through various pathways, interacting with a number of physiological and chemical processes. Microplastics have been demonstrated in many tissues in the human body, including blood, lungs, and even placental tissues<sup>1,3</sup>.

While the environmental consequences of microplastic contamination are well documented, their direct health effects on humans are still being investigated. Preliminary findings suggest that ingesting and inhaling microplastic particles may contribute to inflammation, oxidative stress, and impaired cellular function<sup>4</sup>.

Primarily formed by the breakdown of larger plastic debris, microplastics can act as vectors for harmful pollutants such as persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, and additives used in plastic production<sup>5,6</sup>.

These toxins, often absorbed by microplastics, pose additional threats to human health by accumulating in tissues, disrupting endocrine functions, and contributing to chronic diseases such as cancer, respiratory disorders, and metabolic syndrome.

In light of these findings, it is critical to prioritize research investigating the full extent of microplastics' biological effects, particularly their interactions with the immune system, gastrointestinal system, and liver. While toxicological studies in laboratory animals have provided some data, establishing direct links to human health requires more rigorous epidemiological research.

Scientists should advocate for policies that regulate plastic production, improve waste management, and reduce plastic pollution. Interdisciplinary collaboration between different branches, such as environmental science, public health, and toxicology, is necessary to investigate the effects of microplastic exposure.

Long-term studies will be essential to determine the presence of microplastics in human tissues and their effects on the body.

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In conclusion, microplastics are a significant environmental and public health issue that requires further study. Long-term studies will show the extent to which microplastics play a role in the etiology of diseases. Medical and scientific communities must continue to investigate the effects on human health while advocating for regulations to reduce microplastic pollution. Translating research findings into policy is important to mitigate the adverse effects of microplastics. Initiatives aimed at reducing plastic production, improving waste management, and promoting biodegradable alternatives can significantly mitigate this global problem.

Thank you for considering this editorial contribution.

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