PLASTIC-FREE PARENT CHALLENGE

A plastic-free, how-to guide for you and your little one.

Mamalina

PLASTIC-FREE ME ©

#plasticfreeparent

Introduction

Welcome to the Plastic-Free Parent Challenge 2018! Plastic-Free Me and Mamalina have teamed up to challenge you to adopt more sustainable, plastic-free practices into your homes for the month of June. Every year 8 million tonnes of plastic ends up in the ocean where it can be deadly and by 2050, it's estimated that there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans... is this the world we want for our children?

We know that parenting life can be busy and tiring. We also appreciate that every family is different, with a different pace of life, different priorities and different capabilities. Most of all, perfection in anything is impossible. We're not challenging your family to live completely plastic - free; we're just asking you to think a little *differently,* and to consider the alternatives that we have rounded-up for you to reduce your plastic consumption in a way that can be easily adopted into your busy lives. We really encourage creativity, too: looking for items that you already have at home instead of buying a whole new range of plastic-free items. (Although keep your eyes peeled for the discounts we've secured you if you do choose to make a purchase). Long term, we want to challenge you to ditch disposables, invest in sustainables and teach your kids about the planet and the importance of its protection - all without breaking the bank or taking up too much time.

This guide will walk you through the challenge and break it down into four weeks. As much or as little as you can do *does make a difference,* both to the planet and to your families too!

Follow @plasticfreemeorg and @mamalinauk and join in on social media using the hashtag **#plasticfreeparent** across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. We'll be posting updates, recommendations, advice, plus some prizes along the way.

So, without further ado, let's get started. Good luck, learn lots and have fun!

- Plastic-Free Me & Mamalina

[All illustrations by Harriet Lily Artwork]

Overview

The challenge is broken into four weeks, with each week focusing on a different area of parenting life. Within each week, we've identified 3 things to focus on - but of course feel free to do more, or less, within that.

WEEK 1: MEAL TIME

4th-10th June

Plastic wrapped veg
Lunches on the go
Cling film

WEEK 2: BATH TIME

11th-17th June

Toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Soap & body wash

WEEK 3: TOILET TIME

18th – 24th June

Nappies and nappy sacks
Baby wipes
Plastic wrapped toilet paper

WEEK 4: PLAY TIME

25th July – 1st July

Arts and crafts
Plastic toys
Baking

BONUS WEEK: SURPRISE!

WEEK 1

(4TH – 10TH JUNE)

MEAL TIME

FOOD AND DRINK IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST OFFENDERS FOR UNNECESSARY PLASTIC... SO LET'S SEE HOW MUCH OF IT WE CAN CUT OUT.

THIS WEEK, OUR TOP 3 ARE:

PLASTIC WRAPPED VEG

CLING FILM

LUNCH ON THE GO

1.Plastic wrapped veg

We think supermarket fruit and veg wrapped in plastic is unnecessary. I mean gee, I wish bananas had their own hard skin to protect them... Unless you're growing your own fruit / veg at home (lucky you!), it's actually quite easy to opt for unpackaged fruit and vegetables in the supermarket (aubergines, courgettes and apples are our go tos) or alternatively, a wonderful place to source loose fruit and veg is a local food market where they are also more flexible with you using your own bags/containers and produce can be much cheaper too. Plus you can find out what's in season (always the tastiest fruit and veg!) by talking to the stall owner and you often get to touch and feel what you're buying. Don't forget to take your produce bags and say no to the pesky plastic bag you might be offered. What's not to love? So, how many plastic-free fruit and veg can you source this week?

2. Lunches on-the-go

Packed lunches are a MUCH better way to nourish your little ones than store-bought meals: it means you can control nutritionally what they're putting in their bodies, save some pennies and of course, ensure the packaging is zero waste and reusable. Homemade sandwiches, veggie sticks and fruits, a reusable bottle for juice, last night's leftovers... it's all possible waste-free! Just pack everything up in a reusable lunchbox or wrap it in a cloth and you and your kids are good to go. Old jam jars are also a great option to pack snacks in to – but perhaps just for us adults as we don't want any breakages. Oh and don't forget to bring your own set of cutlery – just grab some from your kitchen drawer, wrap them in a tea towel and you're good to go.

3.Cling film

One of the WORST offenders for unnecessary plastic is cling film. A lot of fresh food doesn't need to be plastic-wrapped to stay fresh, you just need to know which materials to use to store it properly and sometimes that involves being a bit imaginative. You can use old jam jars to store food in the fridge, or beeswax wrap or simplest of all, just leave whatever you ate in the bowl, pop a plate on top and refrigerate. Done! Got time to get a little creative? Make your own alternative to cling film with just some cloth, melted beeswax and oil.

WEEK 2

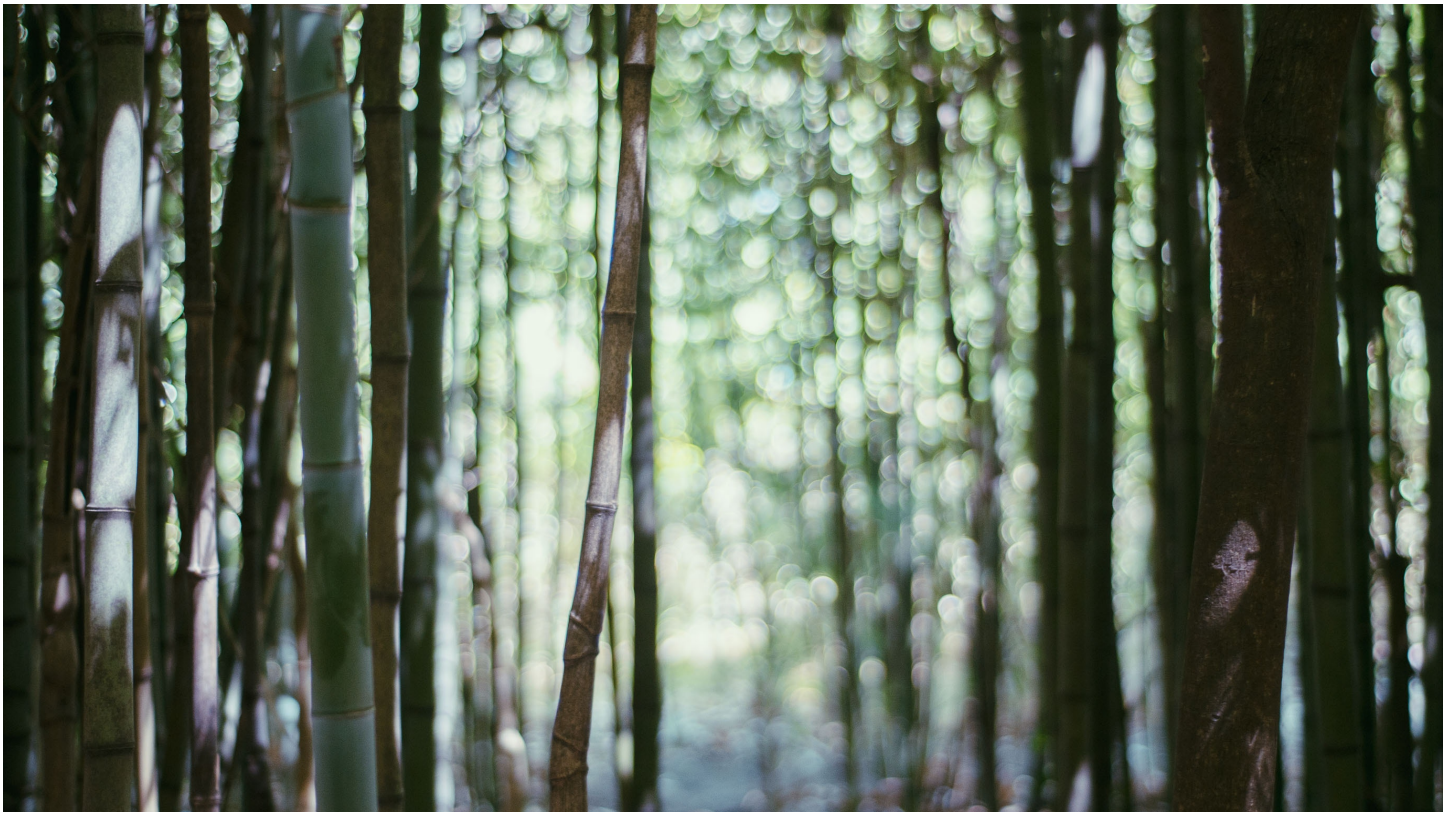
(11TH – 17TH JUNE)

BATH TIME

TIME TO MAKE A PLASTIC FREE SPLASH AT BATHTIME.

THIS WEEK, OUR TOP 3 ARE:

TOOTHBRUSHES
TOOTHPASTE
SOAP & BODY WASH



1.Toothpaste

Did you know that a lot of leading brands of toothpaste contain plastic microbeads (tiny, plastic particles) which kill marine life? Last year, these were banned in the UK and are being phased out... So make sure you check the brand and select a microbeadless paste. You can also find quick recipes online for homemade toothpastes which eliminate plastic packaging, however we are yet to find one that includes fluoride - so always check with your dentist what is recommended for kiddies' teeth.

2.Toothbrushes

One of the most common items to wash up on the shore are discarded toothbrushes. It is estimated that in the USA alone, 1 BILLION toothbrushes are thrown out every year. We recommend switching to bamboo - the handles are completely bamboo and whilst the bristles aren't 100% plastic-free - they're a lot better than your old one! You can find bristles in soft, medium and hard.

3. Soaps and body wash

Let's go naked! We're not scientists but our heads and our hearts tell us that really, water is all you need to bathe young children and for those a little older, hard unpackaged soap is readily available and we LOVE it. Naked products also have a super long shelf-life or another fun option is to make your own baby wash.

WEEK 3

(18TH – 24TH JUNE)

TOILET TIME

WE THINK PLASTIC STINKS.

THIS WEEK, OUR TOP 3 ARE:

NAPPIES & NAPPY SACKS
BABY WIPES
TOILET PAPER

1. Nappies + nappy sacks

Disposable nappies are huge source of waste in any household with young children and given that they're the largest single – item household contributor to landfill, we think that it's time we shifted to an alternative option. Reusable nappies, whilst an initial financial outlay, are 100% machine washable and just as efficient (if not more – nappy rash and leaks are far less common amongst cloth nappy babies), comfortable and a whole lot better for our environment. Yes, it's more washing but aren't us parent doing a fair bit of washing anyway? Oh, and did we mention how cute the patterns are too.

2. Baby wipes

Yuck! These are responsible for clogging drains, sewers and rivers throughout the world – a study reveals that wet wipes contribute to 90% of all blockages. Water and a flannel or cloth will do, perhaps with a dash of an essential oil, and they can be transported in a sealable tin/box if you're out and about.

3. Plastic wrapped toilet paper

Although itself made of paper, most brands come wrapped in plastic. There are toilet papers available made from recycled paper or bamboo, and come completely plastic-free. Some deliver right to your door!

WEEK 4

(25TH JUNE – 1st JULY)

PLAY TIME

TIME TO HAVE FUN! WHAT CREATIVE WAYS CAN YOU COME UP WITH TO PLAY PLASTIC-FREE?

THIS WEEK, OUR TOP 3 ARE:

ARTS AND CRAFTS
PLASTIC TOYS
BAKING

1. Arts and crafts

From biodegradable glitter to upcycling old trinkets, there are so many ways you can get creative at playtime without making plastic waste in the process. What can your kids make this week that is zero waste and just as fun as any plastic wrapped craft? Why not start a little DIY project with your kids – we want to see your creations!

2. Plastic/Battery operated toys

Toys toys toys. There are SO many options, plastic-free of course, like wooden toys and board games that we love. Another fantastic option is pre-loved toys - charity shops and second-hand stores are full of things to keep your little ones entertained (we recommend washing things you buy second hand, to be on the safe side!). Given how quickly our kids grow up, and how changing their tastes are, it makes so much sense and is so much kinder to the environment to source toys in this way, and of course to give back once you're done with them. The fact that 8.5 million new, perfectly good toys are thrown away each year in the UK is a huge problem and we need to make changes.

3. Baking

Time to get messy! Put on your aprons and see what you can make. From sourcing plastic-free ingredients to reusable baking paper and, of course, avoiding that cursed cling film, there's no end to what can be created in the kitchen.

BONUS WEEK

(2ND JULY – 8TH JULY)

PARENT TIME

THIS ONE'S FOR YOU, MUMS AND DADS.

THIS WEEK, OUR TOP 3 ARE:

CANDLES
TEA AND COFFEE
SANITARY ITEMS

1. Candles

Time to relax in the bath with a glass of red and candles? Cheap candles often come in a plastic-wrapped multipack and don't last for long. Higher-quality candles may be more expensive, but they last longer, smell nicer and you can pop them in a jar, tin or holder - completely plastic-free. Consider a soy wax candle that is more environmentally friendly compared to traditional paraffin wax, slower to burn and cleaner (less soot). You can also remodel old, melted wax into a candle with some new wick – then you can really get your money's worth *and* avoid any more packaging.

2. Tea and coffee

Did you know that several leading brands of teabag contain plastic? We recommend a switch to a loose-leaf tea or 100% biodegradable teabags. Coffee can also be a huge offender... the majority of coffee capsules are made from plastic and aluminum which are hard to separate and recycle, with each capsule taking 150 - 500 years to decompose. Stick with a good old French Press and remember if you're out and about to take your reusable cup with you. You can reuse your used ground coffee beans; mix with a little olive oil for a super energizing exfoliator! Also, if you’re nifty with sewing, did you know you can make your own tea bags using some old muslin cloths?

3. Sanitary items

This one's for the ladies. The average woman in the UK uses more than 11,000 menstrual products in her lifetime - such a lot of waste and they sure aren't cheap. We can't avoid the need for sanitary items and there are plenty eco-friendly alternatives; you could try a reusable cup or reusable sanitary towels (if you're already using cloth nappies, this should be a simple switch). Find what works best for you – it's a personal preference.

Recommended Products

If you do want to stock up on plastic-free necessities, we've done our homework and come up with this list of brands whose products we love and recommend. There are LOADS more out there - this is just a guide to get you started!

Meal Time

Beeswax wraps: http://www.beeswaxwraps.co.uk/
Kilner Jars: http://www.kilnerjar.co.uk/
Plastic Free Dried goods: http://www.zero-waste-club.com/
Produce Bags: https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/DoYourBit
Stainless steel tins (&much more!): https://andkeep.com/
Bamboo straws, coconut bowls and spoons: http://pandapackaging.co.uk/
Kilner Jars: http://www.kilnerjar.co.uk/
Glass baby bottles: https://www.lifefactory.com/
Zero waste Groceries: http://www.hetu.co.uk/

Bath Time

Bamboo toothbrushes: http://www.pearlywhiteclub.co.uk/
Package Free soap: http://www.lush.com/
Doterra Essential Oils: https://www.doterra.com/
Dr Bronners: https://www.drbronner.co.uk/

Toilet Time

Reusable Wipes: http://www.cheekywipes.com/
Reusable nappies: http://www.bambinomio.com/ and www.totsbots.com
Recycled or bamboo toilet paper: http://www.whogivesacrap.org/

Play Time

Biodegradable glitter: http://www.ecoglitterfun.com/
Wooden toys / crafts: https://consciouscraft.uk

Parent Time

Reusable coffee cup: http://www.keepcup.com/
Candles: https://purcandles.co.uk/
Natural Rubber menstrual cup: http://www.fairsquared.info/
Reusable sanitary towels: https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/Elvistathesister
Dog Brand: https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/ALELECO
Upcycling Jewellery: http://readorn.london/upcycle
Eco Gift Ideas: https://www.wearthlondon.com/
Ethical lifestyle store: www.luckygohappy.co.uk

Further Resources

Discount Codes

www.plasticfreeme.org/news/discountcodes

Documentaries

Blue Planet II
A Plastic Ocean
Before The Flood
BBC Plastic Planet
Addicted to Plastic
The True Cost
No Impact Man
Minimalism

Useful websites

www.wrap.org.uk/content/the-uk-plastics-pact
www.friendsoftheearth.uk
https://zerowastehome.com
www.thenappylady.co.uk
https://myplasticfreelife.com
www.plasticfreeme.org
www.mamalina.co
www.beatthemicrobead.org

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… And That's a (Plastic-Free) Wrap

Thank you so much for reading our short guide and for taking on the Plastic-Free Parent Challenge. It's time to get started! Remember, any action you take does make a difference, however big or small, the key goal is examining our behaviours and trying to start to make small changes. Remember, in the UK, the average household will produce around 1 tonne of waste per year - add that up across the whole country, the whole world: and that's a lot of waste.

This guide is just a start: stay up-to-date with the challenge through the weeks on social media using the hashtag **#plasticfreeparent** for new advice, discounts for some wonderful brands, and to encourage one another as parents.

We want to educate our little ones to learn about sustainable living, and its importance for their future. They are the ones who will grow up in the world we create, and only by changing our habits can we ensure that the world that they will inherit is still a beautiful one.

Good luck, get creative and enjoy the Plastic-Free Parent challenge!