THE PLASTIC DETOX

COMMUNITY SCREENING DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Co-Directors: Louie Psihoyos & Josh Murphy
Time: 89 min

The Plastic Detox is available globally on Netflix.

Website | Trailer | Watch Now

FILM SUMMARY

When six couples embark on a plastic detox within their homes, it changes their families forever. This eye-opening documentary explains what microplastics and their chemicals are doing to our health and how we can take matters into our own hands.

The Plastic Detox is an eye-opening journey into the hidden dangers of plastic in our homes. From hormone disruption that's fueling a worldwide fertility crisis, to growing rates of cancer, and early heart attack and stroke, this powerful documentary reveals the shocking science behind plastic's impact on human life.

Produced by an Academy Award®-winning team, *The Plastic Detox* features leading scientists and personal stories of couples who bravely share their infertility journey and the steps they've taken to detox their homes and lives. You'll never look at plastic the same way again.

This Guide Includes:

FILM THEMES

The Plastic Detox asks viewers to rethink our relationship to plastic and empowers us to reduce our exposure to harmful chemicals and advocate for a less toxic world. The documentary follows six couples struggling with unexplained infertility, and through an intervention with Dr. Shanna Swan, they make changes in their daily lifestyle to reduce their exposure to plastics and associated harmful chemicals.

“Everything we put on our body, we ingest, breathe, has these chemicals that have the ability to change our bodies’ hormones.” - Dr. Shanna Swan

HOW ARE WE EXPOSED TO PLASTICS

Microplastics and toxic chemicals from plastics are present in water, soil, air, and even human organs — including brains, placenta, and reproductive tissues posing unseen risks. Plastics and endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) are ubiquitous in everyday items, like food packaging, personal care products, fabrics, fragrances and receipts. The documentary highlights how individuals, families, and communities are exposed through everyday products and the importance of making lifestyle changes to reduce exposure.

THE ROLE OF PETROCHEMICAL PLANTS

Petrochemical production carries significant risks to local environments and public health. Traveling to Louisiana’s “Cancer Alley,” the film shows how communities of color bear disproportionate burdens from petrochemical plants with high cancer and mortality rates. Local leaders and grassroots movements have been fighting the expansion of petrochemical projects, sometimes invoking historical injustices and legal protections.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES AND INDIVIDUAL ACTION

Six couples agreed to participate in a non-scientific intervention to reduce plastic use, replace common household products that are known to have harmful chemicals, and to complete tests. The couples saw measurable drops in BPA and phthalate levels, showing that personal action can make a difference.

INNOVATION AND SAFER ALTERNATIVES

Entrepreneurs develop biodegradable, compostable, and plant-based materials, aiming to replace toxic plastics in fashion and other industries. Additionally, scientists and innovators are pushing for non-toxic material design, renewable sources, and a shift in chemical education to prevent harm.

FERTILITY AND ENDOCRINE DISRUPTION

There has been a 50% reduction in sperm count over the past 50 years. Falling sperm counts and the rise in infertility rates are linked to endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) from plastics and everyday products, threatening human reproductive health. Chemicals like phthalates and bisphenols alter hormone function, contributing to obesity, cancers, developmental disorders, and intergenerational health effects.

GLOBAL POLICY AND REGULATION

The documentary highlights that the United States is behind the EU in banning harmful chemicals. During the August 2025 Global Plastics Treaty convening in Geneva, country delegates continued pushing for stronger regulation and the inclusion of the impacts of human health in policy changes and regulation.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What was your most surprising discovery while watching *The Plastic Detox*?

2. Before watching the documentary, did you know that plastic is made from fossil fuels, like oil and gas? Did watching this documentary change how you feel about the expansion of petrochemical plants?

3. How much do you know about the ingredients in the packaged foods or household items you buy? How often do you read the labels? What would make it easier to spot harmful ingredients?

4. Many people now know someone who has struggled with fertility, hormone disorders, or unexplained health issues. Did the documentary change how you think about the possible role of environmental toxins in reproductive health? What conversations do you think families, doctors, and communities need to be having that aren't happening yet?

5. What role can individuals, schools, healthcare providers, and local governments play in reducing harmful plastic exposure – right now? Which of these feels most urgent or achievable?

6. The documentary emphasizes that small, informed changes can reduce exposure to harmful chemicals. What is one realistic change you could make in your daily life to lower your exposure to harmful plastics or chemicals? What barriers – like cost, convenience, and lack of information – make these changes harder?

7. How can petrochemical plants be required to protect the people living in their shadow – by taking responsibility for chemical emissions, disclosing health risks, and ensuring that communities fully understand the potential harms these facilities pose?

8. Many chemicals used in making plastics are not regulated in the US. Do you think there should be clear testing and regulation over the chemicals used in plastic products?

9. The documentary reveals the rise of both plastic production and associated diseases and health concerns arising from exposure. What kind of reform is necessary to protect consumers' rights to a toxic-free household and everyday products?

10. After watching *The Plastic Detox*, what is one question you're still sitting with – or one action you feel compelled to take?

FACTS ABOUT PLASTICS

- **Over 98% of plastics are made from fossil fuels,** like oil and gas. Adding petrochemical additives turns these substances into plastic. Over 16,000 chemicals are known to be involved in making plastic. Only 6% are regulated globally, and safety data is missing for over 60%. More than 2,300 of these chemicals are noted as "chemicals of concern." (CIEL, Minderoo Foundation)

- **Nearly half of all plastics made today are single-use items and packaging.** Many of the chemicals used to manufacture plastic are unnecessary and can be banned and substituted with safer alternatives. (Science)

- **Global Plastics Treaty:** In August 2025, country representatives met to negotiate a global treaty calling for binding limits on plastic production, bans on single-use plastics, and stricter chemical controls. (Minderoo Foundation)

- **Scientists have found microplastics in human lungs, livers, kidneys, hearts, blood, testicles, and even breast milk** – and some researchers uncovered an entire spoonful of them in **human brains.** (ACS, Toxicological Sciences, Nature Medicine)

- **Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals:** Many chemical additives used to make plastics mimic hormones and disrupt metabolic systems throughout the body. Exposure is linked to diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. They can hijack reproductive signals, speeding up puberty, lowering sperm counts, and prompting infertility. EDCs are also associated with cancer, especially breast, prostate, and testicular cancer. (Endocrine Society)

- **Global Crisis:** Scientists have found plastic particles in the most remote places- from microplastic particles at the peak of Mt. Everest to a plastic bag 36,000 feet under water in the Mariana Trench. (One Earth, The Guardian)

- **Nanoplastics:** Microplastics don't biodegrade; they break up into smaller pieces known as nanoplastics, which are so small that they become caught up in the air, water, and food. These tiny pieces have been found almost everywhere researchers have looked. (NRDC)

- **Recycling Myth:** Most plastics aren't truly recyclable – today, **less than 10% of plastics are recycled.** Much of it ends up polluting communities and oceans, harming wildlife and ecosystems. (Toxic-Free Future)

- Plastic is the most common product made from petrochemicals, and currently, production stands at over 450 million metric tons annually. If current trends continue, **global plastic production is projected to double or even triple by 2050.** (Beyond Petrochemicals)

- **Cancer Alley:** This 85-mile industrial corridor in Louisiana hosts over 200 petrochemical plants and refineries. Residents here face cancer risks from air toxicity that are up to 50 times the national average due to the concentration of petrochemical plants. (The Guardian)

- **Global Health Costs:** Health-related damages from plastic chemicals (like BPA and phthalates) are estimated to cost the global economy over $1.5 trillion annually. (Lancet)

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

PROTECT YOURSELF & YOUR FAMILY

Visit unplasticyourlife.com for free, downloadable resources.

The hidden crisis of plastic is urgent and personal. By making small, effective swaps in your home, you can immediately reduce your family's exposure and begin to reclaim your health.

- The Plastic Playbook: This free comprehensive guide provides simple, high-impact strategies to identify, reduce, and replace harmful plastics across key areas of your home – from the kitchen and bathroom to the laundry room and nursery.

USE YOUR VOICE

Help spread awareness by discussing The Plastic Detox and the plastic health crisis on social media. Use #UnplasticYourLife to join the global conversation.

Website: www.unplasticyourlife.com
Instagram: @UnplasticYourLife
TikTok: @UnplasticYourLife
Facebook: @UnplasticYourLife

PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY

Start a petition in your community for change whether it's eliminating turf on the fields and playgrounds or banning plastic bags. Here's a list of great petition models and suggest stories:

- Help Schools Go Plastic-Free: Join parents, educators, and students working to transform school campuses and cafeterias with healthier, reusable options.
- Ban Single-Use Plastics Locally: Work with local leaders to phase out items like plastic bags, straws, foam food containers, and even toxic artificial turf on school fields. Community victories have already paved the way in countless cities and states.

PROTECT PEOPLE OVER PLASTIC

Help advance policies to help regulate chemicals and improve supply chain transparency.

- Halt Petrochemical Expansion: Sign this petition to let US policymakers know that you oppose the widespread expansion of the petrochemical industry. Together, we can help shift power to put people over pollution.
- Support State Policies for Safer Products: Advocate for legislation that bans the most toxic chemicals, ensures transparency in the plastic supply chain, and requires companies to be responsible for their waste.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Get involved with a digital community or find a local chapter near you:

Beyond Petrochemicals
Beyond Plastics
#BreakFreeFromPlastic
Million Marker
Mom's Clean Air Force
Safer States
Toxic-Free Future

Visit Unplasticyourlife.com to get involved and learn more.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ✓ Visit unplasticyourlife.com for a full list of educational and community resources.
- ✓ Get involved **@UnplasticYourLife**