

DISPOSABLE ITEMS



As the standard of living across the world improves and the pace of life quickens, household habits are being constantly reshaped by waves of consumerism. The expanding market of disposable items is one example of this. Rising incomes, lifestyle, marketing/advertising of goods, and continuing profits for manufacturers have all contributed to the increasing trend towards the purchase of disposable items.

Disposable items are also known as throw away and single use items. There is now a disposable alternative for almost every type of durable item manufactured – tissues, napkins, crockery and cutlery, paper trays, wooden chopsticks, glasses, nappies, razors, sugar sachets, tea bags, - even furniture items are seen as ‘disposable’ when purchased from the cheap end of the market! Shops and supermarkets are full of disposable items.

Consumers buy disposable items for a number of reasons – they are convenient, save time and energy, they are seen as a novelty and because of clever marketing. Such items are easily thrown away because they are not perceived to be expensive. However, when we throw away our disposable items we are doing more than just putting them in the bin – we are throwing away our money and our natural resources.

Consumers generally pay a high price for disposable items. But they end up costing a lot more in loss of resources and disposal. Since disposable items are designed to be thrown away they end up in our landfills as waste. This means that we are unable to recover any resources from them. The use of disposable items contributes to the ongoing problem of managing ever-increasing amounts of waste.

Why should I avoid disposable items? They are a waste of money, they over-use natural resources, they end up being non-recoverable resources, they cost money to dispose of, they end up as litter.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Look for quality when buying items
- Look for items that are multi-use – cloth nappies, rechargeable batteries – rather than the single use alternative – disposable nappies and non-rechargeable batteries
- Avoid disposable plates, cutlery, cups and napkins when catering – remember that when it comes to cleaning up, ‘many hands make light work!’
- Use coloured pencils instead of highlighter pens – their shavings can be composted
- Avoid buying trendy or fashionable ‘gadgets’ that have a very short life span
- Avoid take-away food containers – plastic straws, sugar sachets and napkins will end up as litter or be thrown away without being used!