

What type of containers do you store food in? Where do you get the containers from? Plastic containers are commonly used for storing food. What do you think are the dangers of using plastic to store food?

Two chemicals commonly found in plastic containers are **phthalates** and **BPA**. Do you know what they are used for and what health issues they have been linked to?

 Read the first part of the article and check your ideas.

The Guardian

February 2020



Are plastic containers safe for our food?

Many of us have an overflowing kitchen cupboard of plastic containers to store our leftovers.


There are thousands of compounds found in plastic products across the food chain, and relatively little is known about most of them. But what we do know of some

chemicals contained in plastic is concerning.

Phthalates, for example, which are used to make plastic more flexible and are found in food packaging and plastic wrap, have been found by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in measurable levels across the US population. They have been linked to reproductive dysfunction in animal studies and some researchers have suggested links to decreased fertility, neurodevelopmental issues and asthma in humans.

BPA, another chemical widely added to food plastics and can linings to stop them

corroding or reacting with the food, has been subject to increasing regulations after studies linked the chemical to neonatal and infant brain and reproductive harm. But BPS and BPF, two common replacements used in products marketed as “BPA-free”, may have similar effects to their predecessor: studies out of both the University of Texas and Washington State University found that even at a dose of one part per trillion, BPS could disrupt cell functioning. A 2019 study from New York University linked childhood obesity with BPS and BPF.

 Why is it hard to know exactly what other chemicals are found in plastic food containers? Read the next part of the article and check your ideas.

There are many other chemicals added to plastic during production, and researchers concede that many gaps remain in our understanding of how they affect health and development.

Researchers say it is difficult to answer which plastic containers are safe without greater transparency about what chemicals make up everyday plastic materials.



The complex chemistry needed to make plastics makes it hard to know exactly what other chemicals are found in plastic food

containers, said Jane Muncke, managing director and chief scientific officer at the Food Packaging Forum.

Free radicals and reaction by-products are formed during plastic production so that the chemical ingredients you started with might not be the actual composition of the final product. There are also impurities and so-called non-intentionally added substances (NIAS) in the

original source materials that accumulate alongside known chemical ingredients.

Not even manufacturers, Muncke said, “know exactly what the chemical

composition is of the materials of their product down to the last little molecule”.

- 👤 Given the concerns about plastic, what ways can you think of for keeping plastic out of your food? Read the final part of the article and compare your ideas to the journalist's.

How to keep plastic out of your food

Given all of these unknowns, along with the catastrophic environmental impact of our addiction to plastic, here are some tips for lowering your plastic dependence and keeping it out of your food:

- Switch to glass or metal containers when possible.
- Avoid heat, including the microwave and dishwasher, especially when it comes to takeout containers and other

forms of plastic not meant for reuse.

- Plastic doesn't last forever (even if some of the chemicals it contains might) – avoid scratched and discolored plastic and pay attention to “expiration dates” on products such as SodaStream bottles.
- Don't store fatty or oily foods in plastic – many chemicals used in plastic are fat soluble and are more likely to leach into fatty food.

● Cut down on plastic water bottles, which contribute to the widespread ingestion of microplastics.

● Consider replacing your plastic wrap with a reusable option, like beeswax wrap.



- 🗣️ Has the article made you more concerned about using plastic? Do you think you will make any changes as a result of reading it? Which of the suggestions above do you already follow? Which do you think you will start doing?
- 📝 Complete the crossword with words from the article.

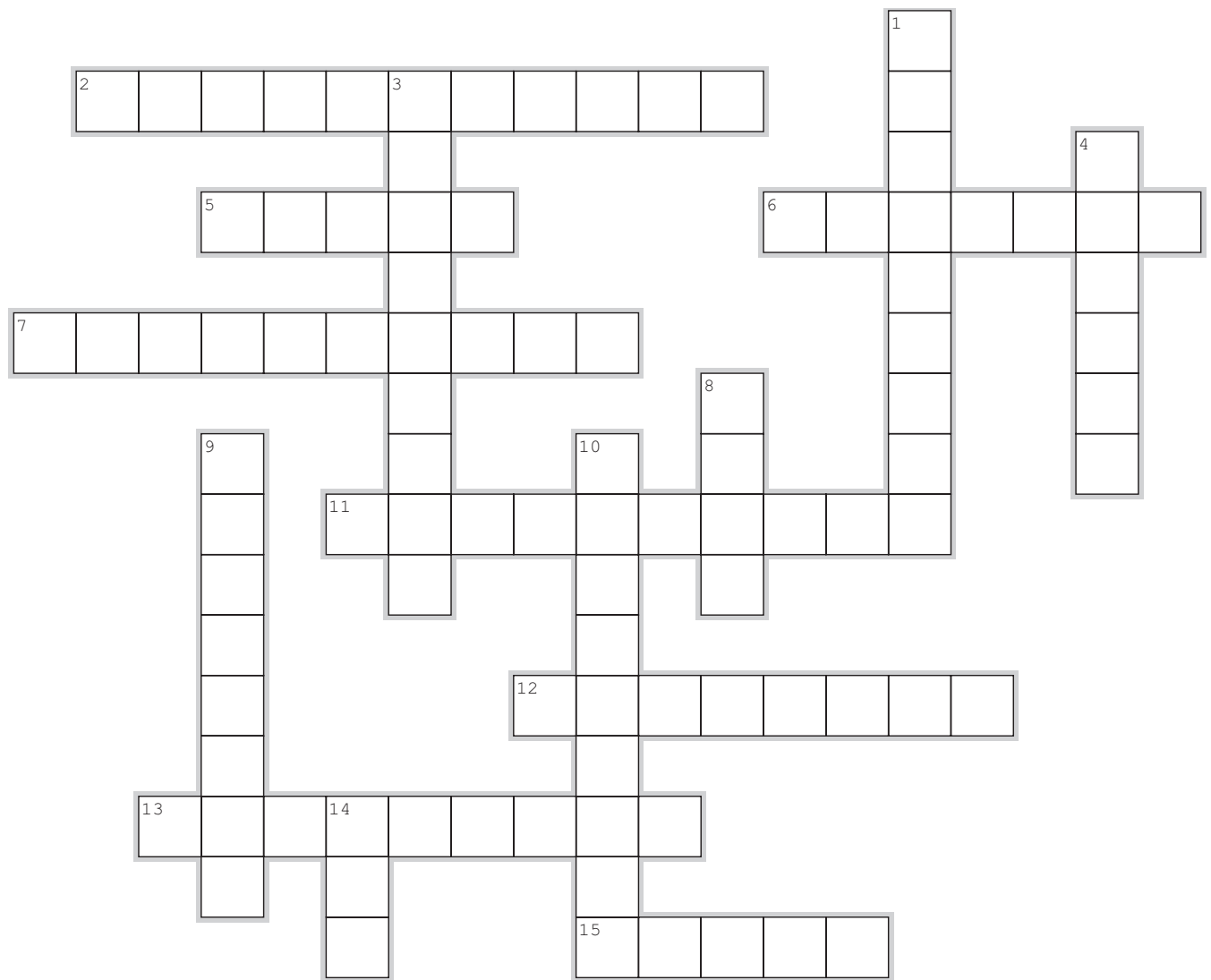
Across

- 2 a thing that has been followed or replaced by another
- 5 keep away from
- 6 something that cannot be guessed at or calculated because so little is known about it
- 7 something that is produced as a result of making something else (hyphenated)
- 11 worrying
- 12 think carefully about (something), typically before making a decision
- 13 a receptacle (such as a box or jar) for holding goods

Down

- 1 materials used to wrap or protect goods
- 3 the time when someone is a child
- 4 change (verb)
- 8 connection
- 9 when whatever is inside something starts coming out because it is too full
- 10 food remaining after the rest has been eaten
- 14 a small piece of advice

When you have finished, choose five words that you would like to learn from the crossword and write example



i In these extracts from the article, what form are the highlighted verbs in?

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Switch to glass or metal containers when possible.
Don't store fatty or oily foods in plastic...

🏠 Complete this rule about the imperative:

The imperative has the same form as the _____ without to.

We use the imperative in many different ways, for example to give orders, to make offers, suggestions and requests, and to give warnings.

We make the negative imperative with **don't / do not**.

The imperative does not normally have a subject, but we can use a noun or pronoun to make it clear who we are speaking to. e.g. **Peter**, turn the TV down please. / Sit down, **everybody**.

👥 Without referring back to the article, using the imperative, make some suggestions for keeping plastic out of your food.