**Federal government set to ban sale of toiletries containing microbeads in 2018**

**Microbeads found in natural health products, non-prescription drugs will be prohibited in 2019**

The Canadian Press Posted: Nov 04, 2016 7:31 PM ET Last Updated: Nov 04, 2016 7:31 PM E

Microbeads were officially declared toxic in June of this year by Environment Canada. The tiny pieces of plastic, less than five millimetres in size, are used as exfoliants and cleansers in toiletries but do not dissolve. (Carolyn Box/5gyres.org via Canadian Press)

**Related Stories**

* [Microbeads a huge concern for environmentalists](http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/plastic-microbeads-small-bits-with-a-big-impact-1.3109211)
* ['Ban the Bead' campaign asking people to support proposed microbead ban](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/microbeads-a-macro-problem-says-vancouver-environmental-group-1.3440096)
* [Federal government lists microbeads as 'toxic substance'](http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/microbeads-toxic-substance-1.3558399)

The federal government says it will ban the sale of shower gels, toothpaste and facial scrubs containing plastic microbeads, effective July 1, 2018.

A notice [published Friday in the Canada Gazette](http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2016/2016-11-05/html/reg2-eng.php) serves as final notice on the long-running environmental complaint, and it sets Canada on a timetable that follows the U.S. for removing the tiny pollutant from Canadian waters.

* [Microbeads listed as 'toxic substance' en route to ban](http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/microbeads-toxic-substance-1.3558399)
* [Microbeads a macro problem says Vancouver environmental group](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/microbeads-a-macro-problem-says-vancouver-environmental-group-1.3440096)
* [Plastic microbeads: small bits with a big impact](http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/plastic-microbeads-small-bits-with-a-big-impact-1.3109211)

Microbeads found in natural health products and non-prescription drugs will be prohibited a year later, on July 1, 2019.

Environment Canada began studying the impacts of plastic microbeads on wildlife and the environment under the previous Conservative government in March 2015. The beads were officially declared toxic in June of this year.

The tiny pieces of plastic, less than five millimetres in size, are used as exfoliants and cleansers in toiletries but do not dissolve. They then find their way into oceans, lakes and rivers where the beads are ingested by a variety of organisms.



**Researcher finds microplastics in every sample of Great Lakes water**2:00

In 2014, about 100,000 kilograms of plastic microbeads were imported into Canada for exfoliants and cleansers, while as much as 10,000 more kilograms were used in the domestic manufacture of personal care products.

Under the proposed change to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, new regulations will prohibit the manufacture and import of microbeads starting at the beginning of 2018, with the sales ban starting six months later.

**Industry moving away from microbeads**

The writing has been on the wall for some time and industry has already begun phasing out plastic beads from products.

The U.S. Congress approved the banning of microbeads in toiletries last December, effective July 1, 2017, while the European Union Commission recognized in December 2014 that the materials could not be labelled as environmentally friendly. Australia has a voluntary ban in effect for mid-2018.

Nine U.S. states already have passed laws prohibiting the sale and manufacture of beads in personal care products, including toothpaste. (Gary Cameron/Reuters)

The group Environmental Defence applauded the government's move.

"We are happy to finally say goodbye to these problematic plastic particles that have polluted Canada's rivers and lakes for far too long, putting fish, wildlife and human health at risk," spokeswoman Maggie MacDonald said in a release.

Nine U.S. states already have passed laws prohibiting the sale and manufacture of beads in personal care products.

According to the Canadian Cosmetic Toiletry and Fragrance Association, a majority of Canadian manufacturers responsible for 99 per cent of the total amount of plastic microbeads used in 2014 have already committed to a voluntary phase-out by the time the federal prohibition comes into force.

[© The Canadian Press, 2016](http://www.cp.org/)