

The Straits Time- SFA's forum reply, 24 September 2022



Takeaway plastic food containers should not be used for repeated storage of food, and only plastic containers labelled as microwave-safe should be used for reheating in the microwave.
ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

Health risks • Plastic food packaging safe when used correctly

We refer to Mr Jared Chia's letter, "Best to avoid single-use plastic food containers" (Sept 16).

Single-use plastic is designed to be used only once and should not be re-used as it will degrade and lose its quality after its first intended use.

To date, there have been no

scientific reports showing that plastic food packaging poses any human health risks when used as intended.

It is crucial that consumers and food establishments use plastic packaging for its intended purpose and in the prescribed way, as advised by manufacturers.

For example, takeaway plastic food containers should not be used for repeated storage of food, and only plastic containers labelled as microwave-safe should be used for reheating in the microwave. Consumers can find more information on the safe use of plastic food packaging at the section on food safety education at our website.

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Health risks • Best to avoid single-use plastic food containers

Singapore has a diverse range of food options and a strong takeaway or “dabao” culture. Single-use plastics are mostly used for takeaway meals here in Singapore.

The public is aware that single-use plastic is generally harmful to the environment, but many do not know that plastics can break off into even smaller plastics (that is, microplastics or nanoplastics).

More of these tiny plastics have been found to flake off under higher temperatures.

Academic research over the past decade has shown the possible health risks of microplastics and the chemicals they leach into food.

The potential health risks frequently cited include cancer, infertility, damage to the nervous system and impeding the neurological development of children.

Although our bodies can remove

microplastics, a concern is that plastic pollution is worsening, and more microplastics will be making their way up the food chain into our bodies. Furthermore, single-use plastic takeaway containers are regularly used for hot food.

Research has already projected an accumulation of microplastics in human bodies.

In countries such as Australia, this issue has been highlighted, and the potential health risks have been used as an argument to legislate against the use of single-use plastic.

The public should err on the side of caution and use glass, platinum silicone or stainless steel containers instead of single-use plastics for takeaway food. Also, the public can submit feedback on the need to legislate against single-use plastic to the ongoing public consultation on Singapore’s raised climate ambition.

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