

# A PLASTIC DIET

Are sea urchin larvae mistaking plastic as food?

**Q** What happens to sea urchin larvae if they eat microplastic? **?**

**A** It may affect their development and feeding behaviour as well as potentially decreasing survival.



**microplastic:**  
plastic particles  
less than 5 mm



How can we investigate this?

- Add microplastic to jars containing seawater and sea urchin larvae
- Take some of the larvae out everyday to look for microplastic beads within the gut, developmental abnormalities and to assess survival

Microplastic can be made small on purpose — like in some hygienic products — or become smaller over time by fragmentation of larger plastic. The effects of microplastic ingestion on marine organisms is still not fully understood.

**!** Models have estimated over 5 **TRILLION** pieces of plastic are floating in the world's oceans.



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