Plastic in ocean contaminating seafood

By Eliza Barclay, NPR

We've long known that the fish we eat are exposed to toxic chemicals in the rivers, bays and oceans they inhabit. The substance that's gotten the most attention – because it has shown up at disturbingly high levels in some fish – is mercury.

But mercury is just one of a slew of synthetic and organic pollutants that fish can ingest and absorb into their tissue. Sometimes it's because we're dumping chemicals right into the ocean. But as a study published recently in Nature, Scientific Reports helps illuminate, sometimes fish get chemicals from the plastic debris they ingest.

"The ocean is basically a toilet bowl for all of our chemical pollutants and waste in general," says Chelsea Rochman, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Davis, who authored the study. "Eventually, we start to see those contaminants high up in the food chain, in seafood and wildlife."

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