

## 300 million toothpaste tubes go to landfill

Enough plastic waste to circle the globe twice is the annual result of us cleaning our teeth with toothpaste from tubes that can't be recycled.

A waste management company called Business Waste is concerned about the volume of plastic waste being thrown away due to toothpaste tubes and is calling for plastic free alternatives to the typical toothpaste tube.

The UK uses 300 million tubes of toothpaste every year. Spread end-to-end that's about 75,000 kilometres of plastic, almost twice around the world. Toothpaste tubes are usually made of different types of plastics, and many brands contain a metal layer inside the tube which isn't easy to separate for recycling purposes.

On average, it takes 500 years for a toothpaste tube to fully biodegrade in landfill, meaning that every tube you have used in your lifetime could still be out there in a big hole in the ground.

Pump-action toothpaste tubes can be easier to recycle but you will still need to check with your local council to see if they can be collected.

Not only are plastic toothpaste tubes bad for the environment, there's a high chance you might not be getting your money's worth, with up to 10% of the toothpaste remaining when you think the tube is empty.

Business Waste spokesperson Mark Hall said: 'Manufacturers do this on purpose. It's all designed to make you buy a replacement tube sooner.'

With people growing more concerned about their plastic footprint, many companies are inventing clever solutions to reduce the amount of plastic we throw away.

Business Waste has compiled a list of some of the best plastic-free toothpaste alternatives:

- Glass jars of toothpaste – Many zero waste shops now stock variants on this, either in a powder, or as regular toothpaste in glass jars. The jars can then be reused or recycled
- Toothpaste tablets – These can often just be

popped in your mouth and crunched up, then you continue to brush your teeth as usual

- Solid toothpaste – You can buy solid toothpaste either on a stick that you apply to your teeth, or as a bar, then you brush as usual.

More sustainable oral hygiene products such as bamboo toothbrushes, recyclable heads for electric toothbrushes and dental floss in non-plastic dispensers are also available.

Toothpaste brand Colgate has launched plastic-free initiatives, including a new vegan-friendly toothpaste that comes in recyclable packaging which is made from the same material as milk bottles. Colgate have also become part of the Terracycle scheme, where you can take your empty toothpaste tubes and plastic brushes to collection points for specialised recycling, and they can be turned into new items such as park benches.

