

The Survival Mom

Safe Plastics for Storage

In the United States, the following codes represent the seven categories of plastic used in nearly all plastic containers and product packaging:



PET or **PETE** (polyethylene terephthalate) is a clear, tough polymer with exceptional gas and moisture barrier properties. PET's ability to contain carbon dioxide (carbonation) makes it ideal for use in soft drink bottles. **Examples: Soft drink bottles**, detergent bottles



HDPE (high density polyethylene) is used in milk, juice and water containers in order to take advantage of its excellent protective barrier properties. Its chemical resistance properties also make it well suited for items such as containers for household chemicals and detergents. **Most five gallon food buckets are made from HDPE.** **Examples:** Milk bottles, shopping bags



Vinyl (polyvinyl chloride, or PVC) provides excellent clarity, puncture resistance and cling. As a film, vinyl can breathe just the right amount, making it ideal for packaging fresh meats that require oxygen to ensure a bright red surface while maintaining an acceptable shelf life. **Examples:** Plastic food wrap, shrink wrap, garden hoses, shoe soles



LDPE (low density polyethylene) offers clarity and flexibility. It is used to make bottles that require flexibility. To take advantage of its strength and toughness in film form, it is used to produce grocery bags and garbage bags, shrink and stretch film, and coating for milk cartons. **Examples:** Squeeze bottles, dry cleaning bags



PP (polypropylene) has high tensile strength, making it ideal for use in caps and lids that have to hold tightly on to threaded openings. Because of its high melting point, polypropylene can be hot-filled with products designed to cool in bottles, including ketchup and syrup. It is also used for products that need to be incubated, such as yogurt. **Many Cambo, Tupperware and Rubbermaid food storage containers are made from PP.** **Examples:** Bottle caps, take-out food containers, drinking straws



PS (polystyrene), in its crystalline form, is a colorless plastic that can be clear and hard. It can also be foamed to provide exceptional insulation properties. Foamed or expanded polystyrene (EPS) is used for products such as meat trays, egg cartons and coffee cups. It is also used for packaging and protecting appliances, electronics and other sensitive products. **Examples:** Plastic foam, packing peanuts, coat hangers



Other denotes plastics made from other types of resin or from several resins mixed together. These usually cannot be recycled.

Another important type of plastic is **polycarbonate**, a clear shatter-resistant material used in restaurant food storage containers and the Rubbermaid Premier line of stain-resistant home food storage containers. Baby bottles and most 5-gallon water containers are made from polycarbonate.

In summary, categories 1, 4, 5, and 7 are considered to be food safe. Category 2 buckets are safe for food storage only when combined with a sealed mylar liner.