

Médecins Sans Frontières' efforts to reduce plastics in healthcare

Plastic consumption is a global problem for the healthcare sector. Within Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), single-use medical devices account for 20% of the carbon emissions from purchased goods.

Ongoing research provides insights and paves the way for effective and adapted solutions, with some already being piloted (e.g., rationalising the consumption of examination gloves). Tackling plastic consumption will require a multifaceted approach, addressing unnecessary use, promoting reuse where possible, and advocating for sustainable alternatives.



“REFUSE”

Integrate environmental considerations within procurement guidelines to prioritise sustainable alternatives.



“REDUCE”

Promote responsible use through healthcare workers' behaviour change, in compliance with medical guidelines.



“REUSE”

Implement reusable alternatives whenever possible, which generate less waste and have a lower environmental impact.



“REDESIGN”

Collaborate with other global actors (e.g., WHO) to engage with manufacturers and advocate for sustainable alternatives (e.g., PVC-free).

Reducing plastic consumption has numerous benefits: decreased fossil fuel consumption, reduced air, water, and land pollution, and reduced toxic chemical emissions.

However, to maintain the quality of care and the safety of our patients, infrastructures for cleaning, sterilisation, and proper waste management capacities are required and are often missing in our resource-constrained settings.

By adopting these measures, MSF will significantly reduce its consumption of plastics, contributing to a healthier planet and promoting the health of present and future generations.

