

What contains carbon?



We all encounter carbon throughout our daily lives. Your body contains carbon. The air you breathe contains carbon dioxide. The food you eat contains carbon. The clothes you wear contain carbon. Through our use of the carbon-containing materials we move carbon from one place to another more quickly than would naturally happen.

Seashells come from organisms that extract calcium and carbon from the water around them to form calcium carbonate shells. CaCO_3 is a white, insoluble solid and is also the main component of chicken eggshells and pearls.

Wood contains carbon because it comes from a plant that once completed photosynthesis, taking in carbon dioxide to produce glucose and build its cell walls out of cellulose.

Plastic is derived from petroleum, which contains hydrocarbons, compounds composed entirely of hydrogen and carbon. Petroleum was once tiny marine organisms that lived millions of years ago in the world's oceans.

Fabric contains carbon. In plant-based fabrics such as cotton or modal, the carbon comes directly from plants. If it is polyester or acrylic, it is made from petroleum products which contain carbon, and petroleum was once marine organisms. If it is wool or silk, the carbon came from an animal, which ate plants to acquire its carbon.

Carbonated beverages are named for the carbon dioxide gas that has been dissolved in the liquid, creating their fizz. Some carbon dioxide remains dissolved in the liquid even if the drink has stopped making bubbles.

A glass of water also contains carbon dioxide gas, although in much lower concentrations than carbonated beverages. This is because carbon dioxide diffuses into water. The amount of carbon dioxide in the glass of water is directly related to the amount of carbon dioxide in the air. This is the same way the carbon dioxide gets into the oceans to cause ocean acidification.

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