Safety Corner

Which plastic bottle is safe to re-use?

The resin or plastic identification coding (PIC) system developed by the Society of the Plastics Industry uses a set of symbols (shown below) to help recycling companies separate different plastics for reprocessing by indicating the type of polymer used to make the plastic items.   Although PIC is designed to tell whether plastic items can be recycled, general public may also use the PIC as indicators whether the plastic items are safe to re-use or microwave-safe.

PIC	Type of plastic polymer	Common use for food items
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Plastic-recyc-01.svg	Polyethylene Terephthalate	Soft drink, water and salad dressing bottles
	High Density Polyethylene	milk jugs, juice and water bottles, grocery bags, recycling bins
	Polyvinyl Chloride	Juice bottles, cling films, non-food bottles
	Low Density Polyethylene	Frozen food bags, squeezable bottles, cling films, flexible container lids
	Polypropylene	Reusable microwaveable ware, kitchenware,

		microwaveable disposable take-away containers.
	Polystyrene	Disposable cups, plates, trays and cutlery, disposable take-away containers, coffee cups
	Acrylic resin, fluoro plastic	Beverage bottles, baby milk bottles, tableware (melamine resin), any other plastics that do not fall into the above categories.

Only recycle code 5 items are considered to be microwave-safe, dishwasher-safe, and are recommended for hot liquid.   Other plastic items, unless designed and labelled explicitly, are generally not microwave-safe.   Some, but not all, codes 3 or 7 plastics may contain bisphenol A (BPA), which has been linked to negative health effects.

The major safety hazards for reusing plastic water bottles and containers are the bacteria and fungi that can grow in small scratches, cracks or chips in plastic items. Plastic items with scratches, chips or heat damage should be discarded.

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