

The oil habit



Hi. My name is Elizabeth, and I'm addicted to oil. Is there a 12-step program out there for me? Not exactly. Even if there were, kicking the habit would be a daunting task. Oil is just way too useful. Its byproducts are almost everywhere, and my daily life practically oozes petroleum.

To rid myself of products tied to oil and its carbon cousin, natural gas, I would have to pull up my carpet and pitch my cosmetics. My premium-gas-gulping car would get the heave-ho. So would the chemicals that keep my pool clean. And much, much more.

In my bathroom alone, there's my toothbrush and toothpaste, plus shampoo and other hair products, hand cream, face lotions, nail polish, rubbing alcohol, bandages, deodorant, contact lens cases and solutions, brushes, combs, plastic pill containers, throw rugs, razors, paint on the walls, finish on the fake wood cabinets, the plastic toilet seat, plastic parts in the toilet, shower head and shower door, caulking, drain stoppers and so on.

The raw, black, goeey stuff is not what's omnipresent. Instead, it's chemicals derived from oil and natural gas that bring us adhesives, medicines, inks, plastic resins, synthetic rubber, nylon, detergents and the like.

So why bother curbing my craving for crude? Because the price has soared, boosting the cost of what I

do and consume. And fossil fuels are finite, produce greenhouse gases and leave a toxic trail.

Recovering from this addiction is going to be tough. Still, it's not hopeless.

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— Elizabeth Douglass – Los Angeles Times Staff Writer