



# Tip of the Month

## May 2010

### Clamshell Packaging

Clamshell packaging, known as thermoform plastic, is formed when polyethylene terephthalate (#2 PET) or polyvinyl chloride (#3 PVC) plastic is heated and shaped using a mold. Clamshell packaging made of #2 PET plastic is generally used to contain food products, such as berries, cakes and eggs. More rigid clamshell packaging is made out of #3 PVC plastic and used to package products, such as electronics. Thermoform plastic is a popular packaging material with manufacturers because it is theft resistant and easily displays the product. However, clamshell packaging is unpopular with consumers as it is difficult to open and wasteful.

Many municipal recycling programs across British Columbia do not accept clamshell packaging because there is a lack of marketability for thermoform plastic. Also, many short lived food products (in compliance with food packaging standards) are packaged in clamshells made of corn or plant based resin. Foods with a longer shelf life are, at the moment, not allowed to be packaged in corn and plant based resins. Because corn and plant based clamshells look and feel like plastic, many residents mistakenly place them in their recycling bin. In order to keep contamination of the collection stream to a minimum, some municipalities outright ban clamshell packaging from their recycling program. To find out if clamshell packaging is accepted through your municipal recycling program, contact the RCBC Hotline.

The best option is to avoid purchasing products packaged in clamshells. Try to purchase products that are packaged in easily recyclable materials, such as cardboard and boxboard. Also, as a consumer you have the power to change the behavior of manufacturers. Let companies you deal with know that you would like to see them shift from using clamshell packaging to easily recyclable packaging. An example of a company switching their behavior is the TELUS Corporation. TELUS recently shifted to plastic-free packaging for all their phones and accessories.

For additional information, contact the RCBC Recycling Hotline, Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm at 604-RECYCLE (Lower Mainland) or 1-800-667-4321 (province-wide).

#### **Need more information?**

Contact the **RCBC Recycling Hotline!**

Lower Mainland: 604-732-9253 | BC Toll-Free: 1-800-667-4321

Hours: Monday-Friday 9am-4pm

Recyclepedia: [www.rcbc.bc.ca](http://www.rcbc.bc.ca)