

PFAS

FAQ

What are PFAS, and where are they found?



PFAS, short for per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, are a group of human-made chemicals widely used since the 1950s to make various products resistant to grease and water. They are often called "forever chemicals" because they don't break down easily in the environment, persisting in soil and water for extended periods. These chemicals can find their way into our bodies primarily through ingestion, meaning we can consume them when we eat or drink contaminated substances. Research indicates that PFAS is in the blood of nearly all U.S. residents, and testing of umbilical cord blood and breast milk illustrates that exposure begins before birth.

There are thousands of types of PFAS compounds. Two common types are:

- PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid)
- PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonic acid)



PFAS are commonly found in everyday items such as non-stick cookware, stain-resistant fabrics and carpets, waterproof clothing, firefighting foams (used near air bases and airports), personal care products like shampoo, and even in food packaging materials like pizza boxes, popcorn bags, and fast-food containers.

What are the health concerns of exposure to PFAS chemicals?

PFAS are **endocrine-disrupting chemicals**. They interfere with our hormone systems. When an external chemical interferes with the hormone system, it can lead to adverse health outcomes.

Current scientific studies have shown that exposure to PFAS chemicals may:

- Affect growth, learning, and behavior in infants and older children;
- Decrease fertility;
- Increase high blood pressure in pregnant women;
- Interfere with natural hormone levels in the body;
- Affect the immune system (making certain vaccines less effective, especially in children);
- Increase certain types of cancer (e.g. kidney, prostate, and testicular cancer); and
- Increase high cholesterol and hypertension.



What steps can families take to reduce harmful exposures?

While it may be challenging to completely eliminate exposure to PFAS chemicals because they are found in so many everyday products, there are practical steps you can take:



Filter Your Drinking Water: If you live in an area concerned about PFAS-contaminated water, invest in a certified water filter designed to remove PFAS. Studies show that reverse osmosis and two-stage filters best eliminate PFAS. Additionally, check with your local water authority to inquire about measures to reduce PFAS levels in your community's water supply.



Safe Infant Formula: For families in areas with PFAS concerns, choose pre-mixed baby formula or prepare formula using water sources that are free from PFAS contamination.



Stay Informed: Stay updated on local fish and game advisories before consuming locally sourced fish, seafood, or wild game to ensure safe consumption.



Effective Dust Control Indoors: Given that PFAS and other chemicals can accumulate in household dust, adopt a regular dusting routine using a damp mop or wet cloth on solid surfaces and vacuuming carpets with a vacuum that has a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.

Mindful Consumer Choices: Be conscious of your choices when it comes to everyday consumer products:



- **Cookware:** Replace any nonstick pots and pans damaged, scratched, or chipped with safer alternatives like stainless steel or cast iron.



- **Popcorn:** Instead of using microwaveable popcorn bags, opt for corn kernels and prepare popcorn on the stovetop or in a microwave-safe glass popcorn popper.



- **Food Containers:** Cut back on using fast food and takeout containers, as many are coated with PFAS. Select glass or stainless steel reusable food/drink containers. If you need to use single-use disposable items, choose **uncoated paper products**- they provide a grease-resistant option and are PFAS-free. For compostable products, select **BPI-certified** packaging.



- **Textiles:** Refrain from purchasing water-resistant, water-proof, or stain-resistant clothing, carpets, and upholstery to minimize potential exposure to PFAS. (See **Mamavation** for a list of PFAS-free raincoats.)



- **Personal Care Products:** Avoid products containing ingredients that include the words "fluoro," "polyfluor," "PTFE," "Teflon," or "perfluor."

These precautions can significantly reduce your family's exposure to PFAS and promote a safer environment.

