

# What You Should Know About PFAS Chemicals



SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE  
Researching the Environment and Women's Health

## What are PFAS?

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are class of synthetic chemicals found in a wide range of consumer products such as stain-resistant carpets and upholstery, waterproof apparel, floor waxes, non-stick cookware, grease-proof food packaging, and even dental floss. PFAS are also used in firefighting foams for putting out fuel fires. People can be exposed to these chemicals from direct contact with products, through the air they breathe, or the food they eat. They can also be exposed through drinking water contaminated with PFAS from fire training areas, wastewater treatment plants, and industrial sites.

## What are the health risks?

Their strong chemical bonds and unique structures make PFAS very effective at repelling water and oil even at high temperatures. These same characteristics also make PFAS extremely persistent, meaning they don't break down in the environment. More than 98 percent of Americans have PFAS in their blood and the chemicals can remain in the body for years. PFAS have been linked with numerous health problems including thyroid disease, certain cancers, high cholesterol, obesity, effects on the immune system, and delayed mammary gland development.



## How can I reduce my exposure?

- ✓ Avoid stain-resistant carpets and upholstery, as well as stain-resistant treatments and waterproofing sprays.
- ✓ Avoid products with the ingredient PTFE or other "fluoro" ingredients listed on the label.
- ✓ Choose cookware made of cast iron, stainless steel, glass, or enamel instead of Teflon.
- ✓ Filter your drinking water with an activated carbon or reverse osmosis filtration system.
- ✓ Eat more fresh foods to avoid take-out containers and other food packaging.
- ✓ Avoid microwave popcorn and greasy foods wrapped in paper.
- ✓ Look for nylon or silk dental floss that is uncoated or coated in natural wax.
- ✓ Tell retailers and manufacturers you want products without PFAS chemicals.

For more tips, visit:  
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[www.silentspring.org/detoxme](http://www.silentspring.org/detoxme)



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