

PFSA's Quietly Seeping Into The Environment

By Lucy Crisetig



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There are thousands of individual PFAS chemicals. They're a complex, and continuously expanding group of manufactured compounds widely used to make everyday products more resistant to stains, grease, and water.

They're used to keep food from sticking to cookware, make clothes and carpets resistant to stains, and create firefighting foam that is more effective. PFAS are also used in industries, such as, aerospace, automotive, construction, electronics, and military.

They take a long time to break down in our environment, so inevitably, they remain in our air, soil, and water, including your drinking water, for a long time.

According to the NIH, more research is needed to fully understand all sources of exposure. The most likely form of exposure to these chemicals is by consuming PFAS-contaminated water or food, using products made with PFAS, or breathing air containing PFAS.

Scientists have studied the effects on animals and agree that PFAS can lead to adverse health effects in humans as well.

The studies indicate that PFOA and PFOS can lead to:

- Reproductive and developmental issues
- Liver and kidney problems
- Immunological effects in laboratory animals.
- Increased cholesterol levels
- Low infant birth weights
- Detrimental effects on the immune system
- Cancer (for PFOA)
- Thyroid hormone disruption (for PFOS)

PFAS absorbs and accumulates in your body, staying in place for long periods of time. Since exposure to PFAS comes from various different sources and in increments over time, the levels in your body can increase to the point where they cause adverse health effects.

Contamination Occurs

PFAS have been found in our water, soil, and the blood of both animals and people around the world.

When you compost products with these chemicals, the chemicals leach into the ground. When you wash clothing, such as water resistant jackets containing PFAS coatings, they can enter the water in your washing machine and enter the water system.

The products degrade and discharge pollution, making it difficult for scientists to trace the routes the chemicals will take as they find their way into the human bloodstream.

Suffice it to say, it's best to avoid them whenever you can.

Here Are The Products To Avoid

Aside from the non-stick cookware that we know and used to love, PFAS are used for many other products you may not know about. (Hopefully you've gotten rid of any of that cookware by now.)

For example:

- They make your dental floss glide
- They're in scotch guard to make carpets stain resistant
- They line the inside of all of your microwave popcorn bags
- The compostable food containers you use
- Surgical gowns and drapes
- The manufacturing of electronic devices including cell phones and semiconductors
- Even in commercial aircraft and low-emissions vehicles.

Even though some PFAS chemicals are no longer manufactured in the United States as a result of phase out programs, these chemicals are still produced internationally and can be imported in consumer goods including:

- Carpet
- Leather and apparel
- Textiles
- Paper and packaging
- Coatings
- Rubber and plastics

In addition, there are replacement chemicals which may be just as bad that have not yet been fully tested.

Ways To Avoid Exposure

Here are a few ways you can limit your exposure to PFAS chemicals:

- Cut back on fast food packaging containing PFAS chemicals.

- Do your research, especially when buying outdoor clothing. Choose clothing without the Gore-Tex or Teflon tags.
- Be aware of fabrics labeled stain or water repellent.
- Purchase products that haven't been pre-treated.
- Skip optional stain repellent treatment on carpets and furniture.
- Avoid nonstick pans and kitchen utensils. Choose stainless steel or cast iron instead.
- Pop popcorn the old-fashioned way.
- Buy personal care products without "fluoro" or "PTFE" ingredients.
- Choose organic foods when possible. Sewage sludge is often spread on crop lands as fertilizer, and the sludge can be contaminated with PFAS. However, sewage sludge can't be used on fields to grow organic produce.

Being mindful of what you put in, on or around your body gives you the power and freedom to live your life on your terms. Now that you know so much of what's been causing health problems, you can choose better.

<https://canadahealthalliance.org/perfluoroalkyl-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas/>

<https://www.sproutsanfrancisco.com/get-educated/pfas-chemicals-crisis/>

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