

EWG'S Guide to Avoiding PFAS



WHAT YOU NEED TO
KNOW ABOUT 'FOREVER
CHEMICALS'

The toxic fluorinated chemicals known as PFAS are widely used in a vast array of consumer goods and industrial applications, including water-, grease- and stain-repellent coatings. They're called "forever chemicals" because they never break down in the environment and they build up in the body.

Decades of heavy PFAS use have contaminated our water, soil, food and wildlife, including through the breakdown of consumer products and industrial discharges. **PFAS can be found in the blood of 99 percent of Americans, including newborn babies.**

Very low doses of PFAS in drinking water have been linked to:

Weakened immunity in children and adults.

Higher risk of testicular, kidney, liver and pancreatic cancer.

Increased cholesterol.

Hormone disruption.

Weight gain in children and adults.

Reproductive and developmental problems.

Low birth weight.

How we are exposed

Tests show PFAS contaminate the drinking water supply at extremely high levels, because of industrial and military discharges.

PFAS end up in food through manufacturing, the supply chain, leaching from food packaging, and

cultivation in PFAS-tainted sludge or using PFAS-based pesticides, among other sources.

Many consumer products may contain PFAS, as either an ingredient or a contaminant.

What's being done

Federal action to stop the flow of PFAS and clean up PFAS contamination is moving too slowly. But progress has been made:

- The Biden administration in 2021 laid out a PFAS action plan.
- In early 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency unveiled proposed national drinking water standards for six PFAS.
- California and other states have banned or regulated PFAS in **personal care products**, **children's products**, some textiles, carpets and rugs, and firefighting foam, among other products.

UNDER MARKET PRESSURE, SOME LARGE RETAILERS HAVE ELIMINATED OR REDUCED PFAS IN THEIR PRODUCTS.

Lower your risk

FILTER YOUR WATER

We tested water filter effectiveness. Here's what we found:

EWG found countertop filters that remove 100 percent of PFAS from water (or close to it).

GOOD GROOMING

With personal care products, don't believe in miracles

Choose personal care products without PTFE or fluoro ingredients. Use EWG's Skin Deep® and Healthy Living app to find safer choices instead. Or look for products with the EWG VERIFIED® mark, which are free from ingredients of concern.



COMING CLEAN

What's in your cleaners?

It's hard to know what's in your cleaners – they aren't required to disclose their ingredients. Consult our Guide to Healthy Cleaning, including EWG VERIFIED: Cleaners.

BEWARE FABRICS LABELED STAIN- AND WATER- REPELLENT

They're usually made with PFAS

Look for products that say they're PFAS-free, like furniture and carpets that haven't been pre-treated.

FISHY BUSINESS

Contamination of lakes and rivers

PFAS contaminate freshwater fish because of industrial discharges. Get the facts about what's in a body of water before eating fish that comes from it.

(NON)STICKY SITUATION

Avoid using nonstick cookware and utensils

Teflon, which makes your cookware nonstick, is the granddaddy of all forever chemicals. Don't use it. Choose stainless steel or cast iron instead.

TAKEOUT TIME OUT

Cut back on fast food and greasy carry-out

Many containers are treated with PFAS, which then leach into our food. That includes microwave popcorn bags, often lined with PFAS.