

What are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of chemicals used since the 1940s in common household and commercial products. PFAS chemicals are often used to keep food from sticking to cookware. They also make clothes, carpets, and furniture resistant to water and stains. The manufacturing and consumption of these products delivers PFAS into our natural environment and into our drinking water supplies.

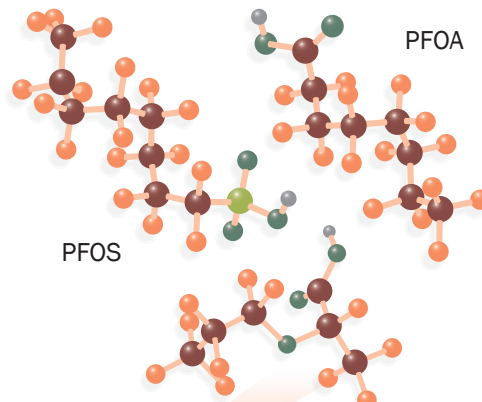
Because they are used in so many everyday products, most people in the United States and other industrialized countries now have PFAS in their blood. Studies of PFOA and PFOS (two common PFAS) found that most people's exposure to PFAS comes from their diet. Drinking water and inhaling dust with PFAS are two other common PFAS exposures. Understanding how PFAS can enter our environment, our homes, and our bodies can help us manage our exposure.

Stay Informed

Look to official sources of information to stay up-to-date on the latest news.

Reliable sources include:

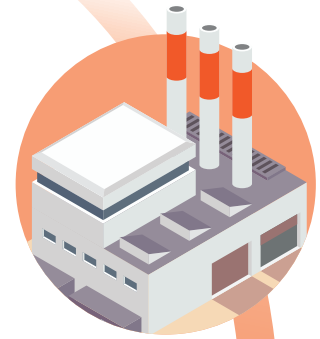
- [The U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)



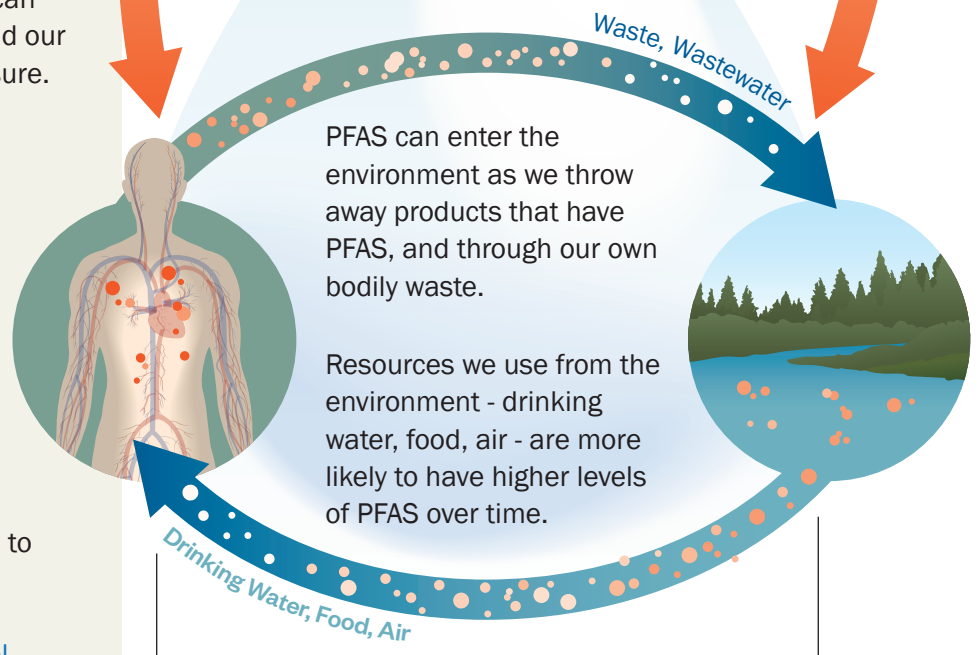
PFOS and PFOA are two of the most well-known and studied PFAS. Though production stopped in 2000, they are still found in our environment. Newer PFAS, like "GenX," are now used in their place.



We swallow, inhale, or rub PFAS into our skin by using certain products, eating or drinking impacted food and water, and breathing in the dust in our homes.



PFAS enter the environment when companies make products with PFAS.



PFAS build up in the human body over time. Scientists are still studying the health effects of higher PFAS blood levels, which may include certain types of cancer, high cholesterol, or decreased vaccine response in children.

PFAS do not break down naturally and build up in the environment over time.

How We Can Reduce Our Exposure

PFAS exposure can vary depending on your local environment, but you can take steps to reduce the PFAS around you. You can identify PFAS in products by looking for “fluoro” or “perfluoro” in an ingredients list. Choosing products that do not have PFAS can require some research, but it is an effective way to reduce your exposure. It can also mean giving up some product features such as “non-stick,” or “water- or stain-resistant.” Consider replacing older and worn-out products that have these features. Studies have also found that cooking more of your meals at home can lower PFAS blood levels.



Avoid buying non-stick cookware that has PFAS and stain-resistant furniture and carpeting. Look for “fluoro” or “perfluoro” in an ingredients list or ask the manufacturer.



Limit eating foods packed in materials that use PFAS. Common food packaging that may have PFAS includes microwave popcorn bags, fast food boxes (like french fry containers and pizza boxes), and bakery bags.



Minimize the dust in your home to limit PFAS particles in the air. Change your home’s air filter on a regular basis and leave your shoes at the door to avoid tracking in dirt and pollutants.



Avoid personal care products that have PFAS. These include certain types of dental floss, nail polish, facial moisturizers, and cosmetics.



Learn about the PFAS levels in your local drinking water. If you want an at-home treatment option, look at the [NSF International list of products](#) certified to remove PFAS from drinking water in the home.



[PFASCentral.org](#) maintains a list of manufacturers and retailers that have PFAS-free policies.

How Does PFAS Affect Your Water?

Water quality is regulated to protect public health and drinking water quality is public information. Thus, water often provides the first clues about health-related trends we need to pay attention to.

Water also connects all of us. Vast as it may seem, our world is a closed system. There is no such thing as “new” water. All water is shared, and it flows in and out of streams, rivers, oceans, and each of us. Along the way, it often carries the things that we put in it, including chemicals like PFAS.

Water utilities are responsible for maintaining water quality according to regulations while also keeping drinking water affordable. Treatment to remove PFAS from water can happen at utilities and in our homes – using technologies like activated carbon and reverse osmosis – but this treatment can be expensive. Our country’s regulatory process helps make sure we are delivering the safest water at the lowest cost. Your water utility’s website is the best place to find reliable information about relevant regulations and our local drinking water quality.