Education

A guide to avoiding PFAS chemicals

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An overview of PFAS

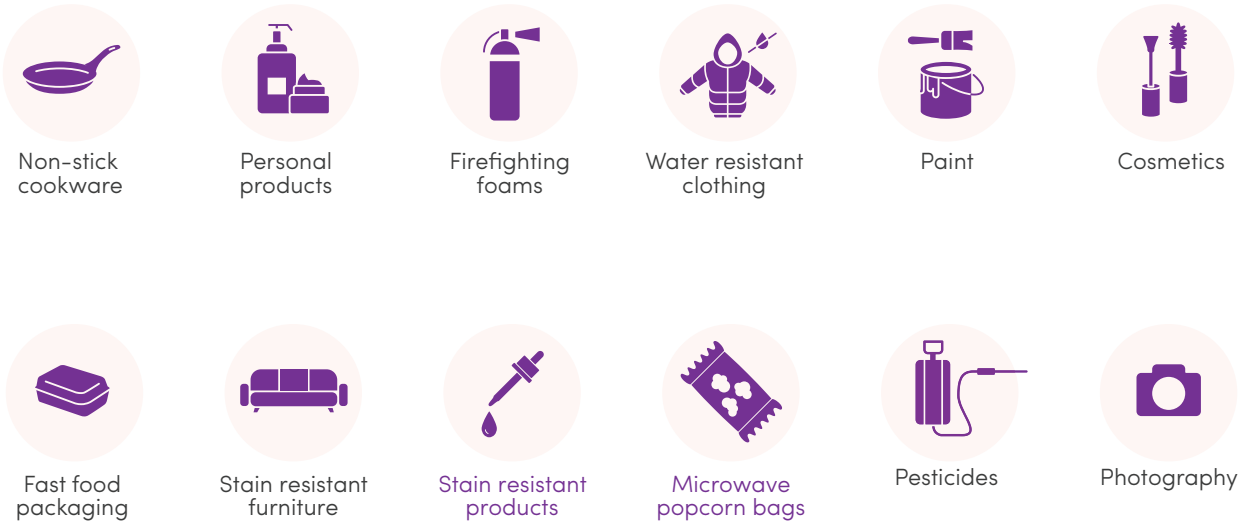
Per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, are a family of chemicals that are widely used to make water-, grease- and stain-repellent coatings. They are used in a vast array of consumer goods and industrial applications

Why be concerned about PFAS?

- More than 4,700 PFAS exist, and this number is rapidly growing, as the industry develops new PFAS chemicals that may be even more toxic than existing chemicals
- PFAS are universally detected in soil, water, air, and in the blood, urine, and breast milk of humans globally
- PFAS are used in hundreds of different consumer products and industrial applications, with many human exposure opportunities. PFAS are commonly present in our food and drinking water
- PFAS do not break down in the environment and are called "the forever chemicals". Certain PFAS chemicals can persist in the body for years
- PFAS are readily absorbed in the gut and quickly enter the bloodstream. Certain PFAS will accumulate in the body with continued exposure, particularly in the liver and kidneys

Reducing exposure to PFAS is the best approach to minimise health risks.

PFAS sources



Avoid Teflon™ or non-stick cookware

PFAS are commonly applied to cookware to give it an anti-stick surface. Above 260ºC, coatings begin to break down and release toxic fumes. Safer alternatives include stainless steel, cast iron and ceramic cookware. If you can't replace your non-stick cookware, there are ways you can minimise your exposure:

- Dispose of old or damaged pans and cookware.
- Cook only on low heat and ventilating well.
- Never pre-heat non-stick cookware or use in hot ovens or grills.
- Hand wash cookware using a mild detergent and nonabrasive scrubber.
- Use wooden utensils to minimise damage to surfaces.
- Store cookware correctly to minimise scratching. For example, store with a cloth between pans.

Make your own popcorn

Microwave popcorn bags usually have PFAS coatings inside that can leach into the popcorn. Toxic fumes are released into the air when the bag is opened. Buy loose corn kernel and pop it on the stove.

Avoid stain-resistant coatings

Avoid "performance fabric," stain proof and waterproofing fabrics in furniture, carpets, and rugs as many of these coatings are made with PFAS chemicals.

Do not use finishing treatments on carpet or furniture such as Scotchguard® or Stainmaster®.

Check your drinking water

PFAS are common drinking water contaminants because of their mobility, persistence, and widespread use. Drinking water can be analysed by certified laboratories for commonly occurring PFAS compounds.
Reverse osmosis and activated carbon filters can remove some PFAS contaminants. Be sure to select a filter that is certified to remove PFAS to below-drinking water guideline levels.

Choose non-PFAS clothing and sports gear

Where possible, choose clothing that does not carry Gore-Tex or Teflon tags, and be wary of all fabrics labelled stain- or water-repellent. Other products that may be treated include shoes, luggage, and camping and sporting equipment.

Cut back on fast foods

Limit fast foods that come in grease-resistant packaging such as hamburgers, pastries and french fries. Studies have detected PFAS in nearly half of tested wrappers.

Choose personal care products without "PTFE" or "Fluoro" ingredients

Some dental flosses contain PFAS and can be a significant exposure route. PFAS can be found in a variety of cosmetics and personal care products, including nail polish, facial moisturisers, eye make-up, shampoo, foundation, sunscreen, and hairspray.

Disclaimer: This is not an all-inclusive comprehensive list of information. Consult a qualified healthcare provider before starting any therapy. Application of clinical judgement is necessary.