

# PFAS

Where to find per- and  
polyfluoroalkyl substances  
and what you can do  
about them



Metropolitan Water  
Reclamation District  
of Greater Chicago

PFAS are a group of thousands of synthetic fluorinated compounds that have been in commercial use since the 1940s and are widely used in consumer products.

These synthetic chemicals are found in every American household and were designed so that they do not break down, which is why they are often referred to as “**forever chemicals.**” These chemicals are useful for their **water-resistant, oil-resistant, lubricating** and **flame-retardant** properties and are common in consumer products and industrial processes.

**HEALTH EFFECTS** According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), research suggests that exposure to certain levels of some PFAS may lead to reproductive effects, increased risk of some cancers, hormonal interference and immune system dysfunction. Because they are used in countless commercial, consumer, and industrial products, PFAS are present in waste streams and ubiquitous in the environment, and many are found in the blood of people all over the world. Research in this area is ongoing, and the MWRD urges the public to consult trusted public health and toxicology authorities for current information.

## **What you can do about PFAS**

You can potentially reduce your exposure and reduce your household’s contribution of PFAS to the environment by choosing PFAS-free products.

- ✓ Check labels of products or the websites of companies that offer products that may contain PFAS. Chemical names including “fluoro” are likely PFAS.
- ✓ Consider PFAS-free alternatives when possible. For example, use ceramic-coated, glass, stainless steel or cast-iron instead of conventional nonstick cookware.

## Where to find PFAS

PFAS compounds can be found in a wide range of products, including:



### PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

- Body lotion
- Shampoo
- Sunscreen
- Shaving cream
- Hand sanitizer
- Dental floss
- Cosmetics
- Contact lenses
- Diapers



### AROUND THE KITCHEN

- Teabags
- Nonstick cookware
- Food packaging
- Parchment paper
- Butcher paper
- Takeout containers
- Microwave popcorn bags



### ACTIVE LIFESTYLE GEAR

- Camping equipment
- Outdoor gear
- Water-resistant clothing
- Athletic clothing
- Bicycle lubricants
- Ski wax



### HOBBY SUPPLIES

- Guitar strings
- Negative film
- Photographic developer
- Canned air dusters
- Epoxy resins
- Wood lacquers and sealers



### HOME AND OFFICE

- Carpet and upholstery
- Electronics
- Cleaning products
- Printer toner and ink
- Sticky notes
- Paint and varnish



### INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES

- Firefighting foam
- Car washes
- Electroplating
- Industrial lubricants
- Pesticides and herbicides
- Aviation hydraulic fluid

## For more information

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago does not create PFAS. PFAS compounds come to MWRD treatment plants in the water we clean. We take public concern about PFAS seriously and are committed to taking action to address these pollutants. Visit [mwrdd.org/PFAS](https://mwrdd.org/PFAS) to learn more.

Research on PFAS is ongoing, and the MWRD urges the public to consult reliable authorities, such as the U.S. EPA, the Food and Drug Administration, and National Institutes of Health, for more information.



[mwrdd.org/PFAS](https://mwrdd.org/PFAS)



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