

We've made some changes to EPA.gov. If the information you are looking for is not here, you may be able to find it on the EPA Web Archive or the January 19, 2017 Web Snapshot.



Basic Information about Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs)

Includes Information on Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA), Perfluorooctyl Sulfonate (PFOS), and All Other PFASs, and on PFCs

Basic Information

How People are Exposed

Health Effects

Related Information from Other Sources

How People are Exposed

How are people exposed to PFAS chemicals?

- People can be exposed to low levels of PFASs through *food*, which can become contaminated with PFASs through:
 - contaminated soil and water used to grow the food,
 - food packaging, and
 - equipment used to process food.
- People can also be exposed to PFAS chemicals if they are released during the normal *use, biodegradation or disposal of consumer products* that contain PFASs. PFASs may be used in commercially-treated products to make them stain- and water-repellent and/or to confer nonstick properties. These goods include carpets, leather and apparel, textiles, paper and packaging materials.
- People who *work* at PFAS production facilities, or facilities that manufacture goods made with PFASs, may be exposed in certain occupational settings or through contaminated air.

- *Drinking water* can be a source of exposure in communities where these chemicals have contaminated water supplies. Such contamination is typically localized and associated with a specific facility, for example,
 - an industrial facility where these chemicals were produced or used to manufacture other products, or
 - an oil refinery, airfield or other location at which they were used for firefighting.

PFOA and PFOS have been found in a number of drinking water systems due to localized contamination. You can view more information about exposures to PFOS and PFOA through drinking water on our [Drinking Water Health Advisories for PFOA and PFOS page](#).

- Few scientific studies have evaluated exposures or related human health effects from inhalation of PFASs or skin exposure to PFASs.

What steps should I take if I have reason to believe that I have been exposed to unsafe levels?

If you live in an area where the food or water is contaminated with levels of PFOA, PFOS or another PFAS that exceed health advisory levels, you should contact your state health department to see what steps they recommend. Recommendations will depend on the level, length and source(s) of contamination. Recommendations may include:

- not drinking water from the public water supply,
- not cooking with water from the public water supply, and/or
- testing private wells.

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