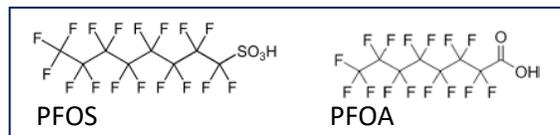


FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PERFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS)

What are PFAS?

Perfluoroalkyls (PFAS) are a group of human-made chemicals that were created for a variety of household and industrial uses. PFAS can repel oil, grease, and water, so they have been used in protective coatings for many different products including food packaging, nonstick cookware, carpets and upholstery (stain-protectants), mattresses and clothing (water-proofing), and have also been used in fire-fighting foams. Some of the more commonly known PFAS are perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).



What happens to PFAS when they enter the environment?

PFAS are persistent chemicals that are not easily broken down in the environment. PFAS have been measured in groundwater in areas where firefighting foams containing PFAS were used. Some PFAS can bioaccumulate and they may be found in fish and shellfish.

How might I be exposed to PFAS?

Ingestion is the primary route of exposure to PFAS for the general public. This can be due to food that has been stored or cooked in materials containing PFAS, by eating contaminated fish and shellfish, or by drinking contaminated water. People who live near PFAS production facilities or places where PFAS-containing firefighting foams were used are at higher risk of exposure from groundwater contamination.

How can I reduce my exposure to PFAS?

Filters containing activated carbon or reverse osmosis membranes have been shown to effectively remove PFAS from drinking water. You can further reduce your exposure by avoiding products that contain PFAS.

How can PFAS affect my health?

Health effects from exposure to low levels of PFAS are not well known, but may include elevated cholesterol levels, thyroid function, preeclampsia, decrease fertility, and may affect the immune system and the developing fetus and child. Animals exposed to high doses of some PFAS have shown changes in the liver, thyroid, and pancreatic function, as well as some changes in hormone levels. Some studies have found increases in prostate, kidney, and testicular cancers in workers exposed to PFAS and people living near a PFAS production facility. Findings from other cancer studies report otherwise or are inconsistent.

Is there a medical test to show whether I have been exposed to PFAS?

PFAS can be measured in blood, but this test is not commonly performed in doctor's offices, and the results of such tests would not predict health outcomes.

What recommendations has the federal government made to protect human health?

In 2016, the EPA developed a lifetime health advisory of 70 parts per trillion (ppt, also ng/L) combined PFOS and PFOA for drinking water. This level is not enforceable. It has been calculated to be protective of the most sensitive populations.

