

PFAS & Health:

*Protecting yourself, your family, and your community from exposure to **perfluoroalkyl** and **polyfluoroalkyl** substances.*

Key Takeaways:

1. PFAS chemicals have been found in various consumer products, in some drinking water systems, and other known areas across the United States, including throughout New England.
2. Families are concerned that exposure to PFAS could negatively impact health and want to seek blood testing to measure PFAS levels in pregnant women and children.
3. While individual blood testing is not recommended, there are simple steps that you and your family can take to reduce the potential health effects associated with PFAS exposure.
4. Advocate for your community by supporting environmental PFAS testing and regulatory drinking water standards.

What are PFAS chemicals?

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of human-made chemicals used in a variety of consumer products and industrial processes. Numerous avenues of exposure to PFAS have been identified:

Consumption of Certain Foods/Drinks

- Contaminated municipal or private well drinking water
- Food packaging containing PFAS
- Foods raised or grown in contaminated soil or water or stored in contaminated packaging



Use of Various Consumer Products

- Non-stick cookware
- Stain-resistant carpets
- Dental floss
- Water repellent outdoor clothing
- Personal care products
- Cosmetics



Exposure During Pregnancy and Lactation

- Exposure to fetus across the placenta
- Formula prepared with contaminated water
- Breast milk from women exposed to PFAS
- More frequent hand-to-mouth behaviors specific to young children (pica)



Inhalation of Dust Contaminated with PFAS

- Especially in occupational (workplace) settings



How can PFAS affect my family's health?

Scientists are still learning how these chemicals could affect the health of people who are exposed to them. Some studies show a possible connection between PFAS exposure and certain health effects, including *toxicity to the immune system, increases in cholesterol, and liver, testicular, and kidney cancers.*



Recommendations, not Regulations

- PFAS have been detected in community drinking water systems at levels higher than both federal and regional government recommendations.
- In 2016, the US EPA issued [lifetime drinking water health advisories](#) for *perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA)* and *perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS)*, two of the most common PFAS.
- State governments have also begun to develop their own drinking water standards for PFAS contamination, some of which include additional PFAS chemicals or are stricter than the federal recommendations.

Does the PEHSU recommend routine testing of pregnant women and children?

No. Although PFAS can be measured in the blood, the results do not help doctors make medical decisions or predict future health effects.

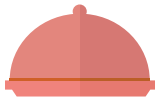


If you or your family member would like to be tested for PFAS:

- Testing is usually not available at commercial or clinical laboratories. At [labs that offer PFAS testing](#), health insurance usually does not cover the cost of testing, which can range between \$500-\$800.

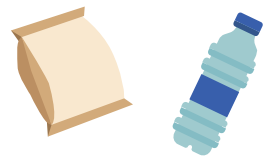
Is there a medication or treatment that can reduce PFAS levels in my body?

There is no current treatment to remove PFAS from the body; this means that preventing and/or reducing future exposures is the most important step you can take to protect yourself and your family.



Here are some simple steps you can take to limit your exposure to PFAS:

- Cut back on takeout and delivery, as PFAS coats paper and cardboard food containers.
- Stop using microwaveable popcorn bags, as they are coated with PFAS.
- Consider replacing non-stick “Teflon” pots, pans, and utensils. Dispose of old, damaged, or flaking non-stick cookware. Do not clean non-stick cookware in the dishwasher.
 - *Safer alternatives to Teflon cookware include stainless steel and iron.*
- Discard old, frayed, stain-resistant carpeting and upholstery, as well as old cans of waterproofing treatments.
- If your water system has high levels of PFAS, use an alternative water source (or a filter [certified to remove PFAS](#)) until the water system has taken steps to reduce PFAS levels.



Interested in learning more about PFAS?

- Agency of Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR) at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas
- Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (PEHSU) at www.pehsu.net



www.childrenshospital.org/pehc

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