

EWG's Guide to PFCs

Perfluorochemicals, or PFCs, are widely-used water, grease and stain repellents.

What are perfluorochemicals?

They're found in carpets and on clothes, on fast-food wrappers, and on the inner lining of pet food bags. You might know them as Teflon[®], Scotchgard[™], Stainmaster[®] and Gore-Tex[®]. They pollute water, are persistent in the environment, and remain in the human body for years. Companies that manufacture PFCs have agreed to phase out one variety, called PFOA, by 2015. Unfortunately, there's no evidence that the chemicals being used to replace it are any safer.



What problems are associated with PFCs?

PFCs are associated with smaller birth weight and size in newborn babies, elevated cholesterol, abnormal thyroid hormone levels, liver inflammation, and weaker immune defense against disease--all good reasons to reduce your exposure.

HOW TO AVOID PFCs

Forgo the optional stain treatment on new carpets and furniture.

Find products that haven't been pre-treated, and if the couch you own is treated, get a cover for it.

Choose clothing that doesn't carry Teflon[®] or Scotchgard[™] tags.

This includes fabric labeled stain- or water-repellent. When possible, opt for untreated cotton and wool.

Avoid non-stick pans and kitchen utensils.

Opt for stainless steel or cast iron instead.

Cut back on greasy packaged and fast foods.

These foods often come in treated wrappers.

Use real plates instead of paper.

Pop popcorn the old-fashioned way on the stovetop.

Microwaveable popcorn bags are often coated with PFCs on the inside.

Choose personal care products without "PTFE" or "perfluoro" in the ingredients.

Use EWG's Skin Deep at cosmeticsdatabase.com to find safer choices.

