



# EWG'S GUIDE TO AVOIDING PFCs

A FAMILY OF CHEMICALS YOU DON'T WANT NEAR YOUR FAMILY

Per- or poly-fluorochemicals, known as PFCs, constitute a multi-billion dollar family of chemicals that are widely used to make water-, grease- and stain-repellent coatings and for other purposes in a vast array of consumer goods and industrial applications. These chemicals are notoriously persistent in the environment and the human body, and some have been linked to serious health effects. **Because PFCs are so widely used and contaminate the environment in so many ways (product degradation, pollution discharges, etc.), scientists and regulators have had difficulty tracing the exact routes that PFCs may take as they insidiously find their way into human blood – a near-universal phenomenon in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**

## WHERE DO YOU FIND PFCs?

They're used in coatings on carpets and clothing, in microwave popcorn bags and on fast-food wrappers. Most waterproof or stain-repellent clothing is coated with them, and while many responsible clothing companies are seeking safer alternatives, PFC coatings remain common in the marketplace. The fabric may be labeled with brands such as **Teflon, Scotchgard, Stainmaster, Polartec or Gore-Tex**, but these are only a handful of the brands that still contain these chemicals.

### TESTS BY GREENPEACE FOUND PFCs IN:



Jackets made by

**NORTH FACE**

**PATAGONIA**

**ADIDAS**

**COLUMBIA**

**JACK WOLFSKIN**



Swimwear from

**DISNEY**

**BURBERRY**

**ADIDAS**



Shoes from

**NIKE**

**PUMA**

The wristband of the new **Apple Watch Sport** model is also made with PFCs, according to promotional information from the company.

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## WHAT HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE LINKED TO PFCs?

Exposure to PFCs has been associated with kidney and testicular cancer, high cholesterol, abnormal thyroid hormone levels, pregnancy-induced hypertension and preeclampsia, obesity and low birth weight – all good reasons to reduce your exposure.

PFCs pollute water, are persistent in the environment and remain in the body for years. **Leading manufacturers of PFCs have agreed to phase out some of these chemicals by the end of 2015, including PFOA, the most notorious, which used to be a key ingredient in making Teflon.** Unfortunately, there's no evidence that the chemicals that have replaced PFOA are much safer.

## HOW CAN YOU AVOID PFCs?



Find products that haven't been pre-treated and skip optional stain-repellent treatment on new carpets and furniture. Many of these coatings are made with PFCs.



Cut back on fast food and greasy carryout food. These foods often come in PFC-treated wrappers.



Do your research, especially when buying outdoor gear, and choose clothing that doesn't carry Gore-Tex or Teflon tags. Be wary of all fabrics labeled stain- or water-repellent, even when they don't carry a recognizable brand tag.



Avoid non-stick pans and kitchen utensils. Opt for stainless steel or cast iron instead.



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 “fluoro” ingredients. Use EWG's Skin Deep database and app to find safer choices. Avoid using Oral-B Glide floss, which is made by Gore-Tex.

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