Support the comprehensive ban on PFAS

We need to stop "forever chemicals" before Rhode Islanders are exposed

The Problem:

PFAS are a class of human-made chemicals that are incredibly persistent in the environment and also highly toxic. PFAS have been linked to cancers, reproductive harms, and other health problems. Unfortunately, they are still found in many household items like some carpets, cookware, outdoor apparel, and even baby bibs! **Toxic chemicals shouldn't be near our food or our children.**

With a lack of action at the federal level, it is state legislatures across the country that are pushing manufacturers to phase out PFAS. Last year, Rhode Island joined this growing movement when the General Assembly passed laws banning PFAS in food packaging and setting a maximum contaminant limit for PFAS in drinking water. These are great first steps, but until Rhode Island passes a more comprehensive ban on toxic PFAS, these chemicals will continue to contaminate our waterways and our bodies.

The Solution:

*Clean Water Action is supporting legislation this session that will ban these dangerous PFAS chemicals from a range of products we use every day *before* these toxins can contaminate our bodies and the environment:*

The Comprehensive PFAS Ban Act of 2023 (S196/H5673):

- Phases out the sale of residential carpets or rugs, fabric treatments, cosmetics, cookware, juvenile products, apparel including outdoor apparel, cleaning products, menstrual products, and artificial turf that contain intentionally added PFAS. **We need to reduce our exposure to PFAS in our homes and in our environment, with a focus on protecting young children.**
- Phases out the use of PFAS chemicals in firefighting foam, which is a leading source of PFAS contamination, and moves the state towards phasing out firefighting personal protective equipment that contains PFAS, so we can protect first responders and our groundwater.

Why are PFAS so dangerous?

PFAS are a class of over 12,000 human-made chemicals which includes Per- and Poly- fluoroalkyl substances. These chemicals contain chains of fluorine-carbon bonds which are very stable and difficult to destroy. This makes PFAS incredibly persistent in the environment and allows these chemicals to bioaccumulate in the human body. Evidence of harm led to the phase-out of two PFAS (PFOA and PFOS), but thousands remain and science indicates that other PFAS chemicals should not be considered safe substitutes.

We are exposed to PFAS through multiple sources. For some people, the main source of contamination is through drinking water. Drinking water can become contaminated with PFAS by fire fighting foam, the discarding of manufacturing and chemical waste, and landfill leachate.

But we are also exposed through the products we use and consume every day. Use in consumer products is common because PFAS adds a grease-, oil-, and water-resistance to materials that would otherwise not have that quality. Unfortunately, that means PFAS are found in a lot of different products including carpets, cosmetics, cookware, outdoor apparel, juvenile products, firefighting foam, and stain-resistant treatments. This is why we need the Rhode Island General Assembly to take action.

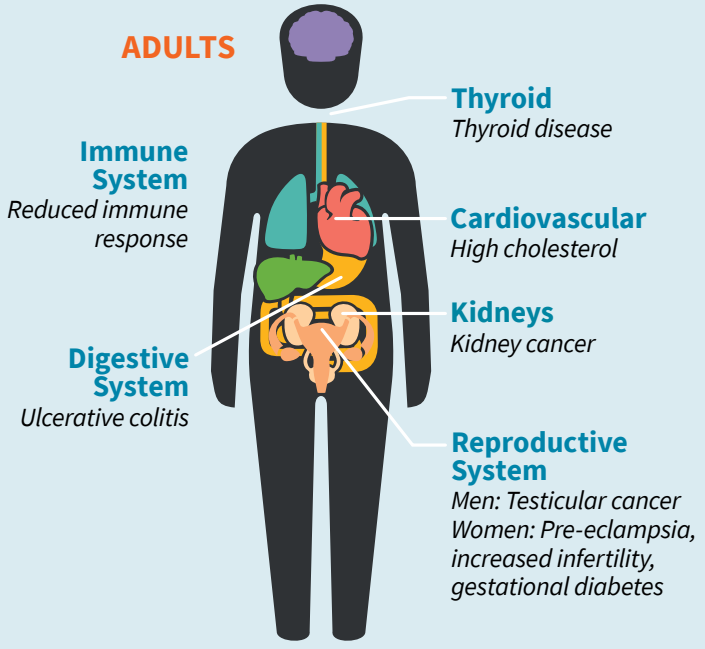
Health Risks of Exposure to PFAS

Research has linked the long-term exposure to PFAS to certain cancers including testicular and kidney cancer. Other studies on PFAS have linked PFAS exposure to thyroid problems and reproductive issues including miscarriage, preeclampsia and impaired fetal growth. The legacy PFAS chemicals PFOA and PFOS, which are still in our environment, are presumed to be immune hazards to humans, meaning they suppress the immune system. Due to the persistence of PFAS in the human body, the chemicals can accumulate over time, creating greater risk for health impacts. And because they take a very long time to break down in the environment, the sooner we phase them out of use, the better.

Are there alternatives to PFAS?

Yes! Lots of companies including Patagonia and IKEA are already voluntarily moving away from PFAS due to consumer demand for safer products! Even firefighting foam has safer alternatives. Most Rhode Island municipalities have already begun to replace their class B firefighting foam with a safer alternative that does not include PFAS.

Health Impacts of PFAS



CLEAN WATER ACTION
CLEAN WATER FUND
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS: PEOPLE • ACTION • JUSTICE

134 Thurbers Avenue, Suite 118, Providence, RI 02905
Tel. (401) 331.6972 • providence@cleanwater.org
CleanWaterActionRI @cleanwater_RI