How to Avoid the “Forever Chemicals” Hiding in Your Diet

6 MIN READ

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A new study maps how PFAS shows up in your bloodstream from your diet and what you can do to reduce your exposure without falling into fear.

Let’s start with the hard truth: Almost all of us carry *forever chemicals* (PFAS) in our blood right now. PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are found in everything from tap water to firefighting foam to nonstick pans and are almost certainly in your body right now. And a new **2025 study** from researchers at Boston University and the California Department of Public Health shows just how these synthetic chemicals are getting there.

But before we dive into what to avoid (and what to do), let’s take a breath. This article isn’t about fear. It’s about empowerment and how small shifts in what you drink, eat, and buy can lead to lower toxic load and better health outcomes over time.

Where Are PFAS Sneaking Into Your System?

In one of the most rigorous studies to date, researchers analyzed blood samples from 700 adults across California to identify levels of legacy PFAS, those long-chain compounds that stick around in our bodies and the environment. They paired those results with participants’ food diaries and local water quality data.

Here’s what they found:

- **Tap water.** People living in areas with detectable PFAS in their public water supply had significantly higher blood concentrations of PFHxS, PFOA, and PFOS, three of the most studied and harmful PFAS compounds.
- **Seafood, eggs, and brown rice** were all associated with elevated PFAS levels in the blood, especially PFNA, PFDeA, and PFUnDA.
- **Packaging might not be the villain anymore.** Unlike earlier studies, takeout food and packaged meals didn't show strong associations with PFAS exposure. That may reflect recent policy changes phasing out older PFAS in food packaging.

While none of this is breaking news on its own, the novelty lies in how the researchers modeled these exposures together, adjusting for confounders like age, race, income, and lifestyle factors. The result? A much clearer picture of how PFAS makes its way into our bodies today.

"Diet and water may still be an important source of exposure in the general population," says Dr. Emily Pennoyer, the study's lead author. One of our key takeaways is that even low levels of PFAS in water, levels well below crisis zones, can significantly contribute to body burden over time.

So What Are Forever Chemicals, Really?

PFAS are a large class of manmade chemicals developed in the 1940s. They're prized for their resistance to water, oil, and heat, which is why they were used in everything from waterproof jackets to grease-resistant food wrappers.

The problem? These chemicals don't easily break down. And **studies** have linked long-term PFAS exposure to:

- Immune system disruption
- Increased cholesterol

- Liver damage
- Hormonal imbalances
- Increased risk of some cancers

Worse still: PFAS can **accumulate** over a lifetime, which means reducing exposure now matters more than ever for your long-term health.

4 Things to Do to Reduce Your PFAS Exposure

Legacy PFAS may be on the decline in food packaging, but as this study shows, they're still showing up in water, seafood, soil, home goods, skincare, and clothing. The good news? You have agency.

1. Check Your Drinking Water

The most reliable way to lower PFAS exposure? Filter your tap water with intention.

- **Look for NSF/ANSI-certified filters** (Standards 53 or 58). Reverse osmosis and activated carbon filters are most effective. (We recommend the **Home Master Artesian Reverse Osmosis System** because it removes up to 99% of contaminants, including chloramines, chlorine, and heavy metals. Here's how to find out **what's in your water**.)
- **Check Your bottled water:** The FDA recently released a report saying that PFAS were detected in some **bottled spring and purified waters** (artesian and mineral waters showed non-detectable PFAS levels) Manufacturers are not required to test for it. Unless you know the source and the filtration method, it may not be safer than tap.

- **Check your local water supply:** **Use the EPA's PFAS Tracking Tool** to check your local water system.

- **Review your utility's annual Water Quality Report:** Public utilities are legally required to test and report on contaminants. Look for PFOA, PFOS, and PFHxS in the results.
- **Get Private Water Testing:** If you use well water or want peace of mind, order a certified PFAS test from a lab like Tap Score or Eurofins. Look for labs certified under EPA Method 537.1.

2. Choose Your Proteins Wisely

Seafood, eggs, and certain grains can carry PFAS, especially when sourced from contaminated regions.

- **Eat ocean-caught fish over freshwater.** Still one of the most common dietary sources. Freshwater fish tend to have higher PFAS levels than ocean fish, especially from contaminated rivers or lakes.
- **Buy organic, pasture-raised eggs** from local farms when possible. PFAS in eggs is likely tied to contaminated feed or soil. Choose organic, pasture-raised eggs from trusted local farms when possible. Look for regional contamination reports. Some states have mapped PFAS in agricultural soil and groundwater.
- **Watch for foods from known PFAS hotspots.** There are maps of PFAS on land in the **US** and **Europe**, as well as **hotspots in waters around the world**.

3. Be Smart About Your Rice

- **If you eat rice, rotate in white rice or other grains**. Because PFAS accumulate in the

outer layers, brown rice may have higher levels than white rice. The study found that higher intake of white rice was associated with significantly higher concentrations of PFOA and PFOS in human milk.

- **Know your source**: When possible, choose rice grown in regions with low PFAS contamination. California-grown rice generally has lower levels than rice from some international sources.
- **Rinse thoroughly and cook in excess water**: Rinsing and boiling rice in a 6:1 water-to-rice ratio, then draining excess water, may help reduce PFAS and arsenic content.

4. Feed Your Microbiome (and Possibly Filter PFAS)

Emerging research suggests that what you eat may help your body clear PFAS more effectively. In a **2025 pilot study**, mice fed a diet rich in oat ?-glucan, a type of soluble fiber, had lower PFAS concentrations in their blood, despite receiving a higher overall PFAS dose through drinking water. Researchers believe this fiber may disrupt how PFAS are reabsorbed in the gut, allowing more to be excreted.

While early and animal-based, this study points to a promising direction: a high-fiber diet may support your body's **natural detox systems**. Fiber-rich foods like oats, lentils, and flaxseed already benefit metabolic health, making this one more reason to put them on your plate and **choose foods that support a healthy microbiome**.

5. Avoid PFAS in Everyday Products

These chemicals aren't just in your food and water. They're also in waterproof jackets, nonstick pans, stain-resistant carpets, and even some cosmetics.

- **Look for "PFAS-free" gear and home goods.** Avoid "water-repellent," "stain-resistant," and "flame-retardant" clothing, furniture, carpets, and rugs unless the brand

clearly states what chemicals are used. Use ceramic, stainless steel, carbon steel, or cast iron cookware to avoid “nonstick” cookware.

- **Choose clean, verified personal care products**, **especially lipstick**, mascara, and foundation, which have shown contamination in recent studies. Check the **EWG Skin Deep** database.

Longevity isn’t about dodging every toxin. It’s about designing a life that helps your body do what it’s built to do: adapt, recover, and thrive. Drink wisely. Eat intentionally. Make purchases that support a healthy environment, and remember that your lifestyle choices are powerful medicine.

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