



What are per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

PFAS are a large, complex group of synthetic chemicals consisting of a chain of linked carbon and fluorine atoms. They have been used in consumer products around the world since about the 1950s and are known to be highly persistent in the environment. They have been given the name 'forever chemicals' within the media because of their persistence. These chemicals can be found in many everyday products for example to keep food from sticking to packaging or cookware, make clothes and carpets resistant to stains, and create firefighting foam.

Concerns about the impact of PFAS on public health and the environment have arisen due to the large number of PFAS that are available, their widespread occurrence, bioaccumulation and persistence in the environment. In June 2023 the Royal Society of Chemistry published a position statement on PFAS in UK drinking water:

<https://www.rsc.org/globalassets/22-new-perspectives/sustainability/a-chemicals-strategy-for-a-sustainable-chemicals-revolution/pfas-policy-position-dec-2021.pdf>

Currently work is being undertaken to understand the impact of PFAS on human health and the environment and provide guidance to support human health risk assessments. The Committee on Toxicity (COT) has published an Interim Position Paper on PFAS which can be found here:

<https://cot.food.gov.uk/Interim%20Position%20Paper%20on%20Per-%20and%20Polyfluoroalkyl%20Substances>

This is a developing area and the BTS will aim to provide additional information via links to published statements when they become available so please stay connected with the BTS via its website <https://www.thebts.org/>.

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