PFAS Health Risks

PFASs, a class of highly fluorinated chemicals, have been linked to a wide range of health effects including immune system toxicity, elevated cholesterol, altered mammary gland development, effects on the thyroid and liver, and cancers. Scientists are concerned that exposures to chemicals that alter mammary gland development may increase the risk of breast cancer later in life.

There are over 4,000 PFASs on the global market. This class of toxic chemicals is used in many consumer products such as stain-resistant carpets, non-stick pans, waterproof jackets, and grease-proof food packaging. These chemicals are extremely persistent, and some can linger in our bodies for many years. Nearly all Americans carry traces of these chemicals in our bodies.

PFASs are also showing up in a growing number of drinking water supplies across the U.S. Often this contamination is linked to the use of firefighting foams commonly used at military bases, airports, and fire training areas. Some contamination comes from industrial sources. A 2016 study estimated that six million Americans were served by a public water supply that exceeded an EPA health guideline for two PFAS chemicals. More recently, the Environmental Working Group estimated that over 100 million Americans have these toxic chemicals in their drinking water.

What can you do to reduce your exposure?

Avoid:

• Products with words containing “perfluor-”, “polyfluor”, and “PTFE” on the label
• Stain-resistant furniture and carpets
• Microwave popcorn and fast-food packaging

Choose:

• Fresh foods
• Cast iron, glass and enamel cookware
• Solid block carbon filtration for your drinking water

Make your voice heard!

Join Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition in advocating for better protection from PFAS exposures. Visit www.mbcc.org for information on MBCC’s 2019 Water Quality Campaign as well as additional information on reducing your toxic exposure.