



MASSACHUSETTS BREAST CANCER COALITION

PFAS in Food Packaging



PFAS Health Risks

PFAS, 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 4,700 PFAS chemicals 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. PFAS have extremely strong chemical bonds and unique structures that make them extremely persistent, meaning they don't break down in the environment. Some PFAS can linger in our bodies for many years. Nearly all Americans carry traces of these chemicals in our bodies.

Food packaging is a source of PFAS exposure and environmental contamination.

Chemicals used in food packaging can leach into food and enter people's bodies. A 2019 study by Silent Spring Institute revealed that people who ate more meals at home had significantly lower levels of PFAS in their bodies vs. those who consumed more fast food or ate out more often. This same study also found that people who ate more microwave popcorn had higher PFAS in their blood. In the past two years, Washington state and Maine have both been successful in adopting policies banning the use of PFAS in food packaging, likely to be followed next by California which has prioritized similar policies under their Green Chemistry & Safer Consumer Products legislation. It is crucial Massachusetts joins this list as well.

In addition to Massachusetts, the following states also have policies currently up for consideration related to banning PFAS from food packaging in favor of safer alternative options: Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

What can you do to reduce your exposure?

Avoid:

- Fast-food packaging and packaged foods
- Microwave popcorn, Teflon and other forms of non-stick cookware

Choose:

- Cook at home using fresh foods to avoid take-out containers and other food packaging
- Cast iron, stainless steel, glass, or enamel cookware

Make your voice heard!

- Tell retailers and manufacturers that you want products made without PFAS
- Contact your state legislators and ask them to support H.3839 and S.1315, legislation that would ban PFAS from food packaging across the Commonwealth

CONTACT US

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