PFAS Health Effects

House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry

Vermont Department of Health

4/30/2026

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Per- and polyfluoroalkylated substances (PFAS) are a class of widely-used and stable chemicals

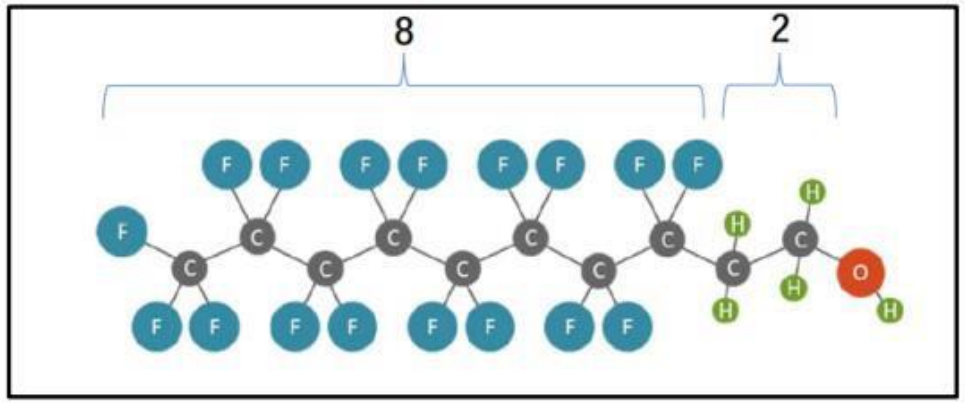


Figure 3. Example of a polyfluoroalkyl substance.
Source: M. Olson, Trihydro. Used with permission. PFAS-1, Figure 2-12.

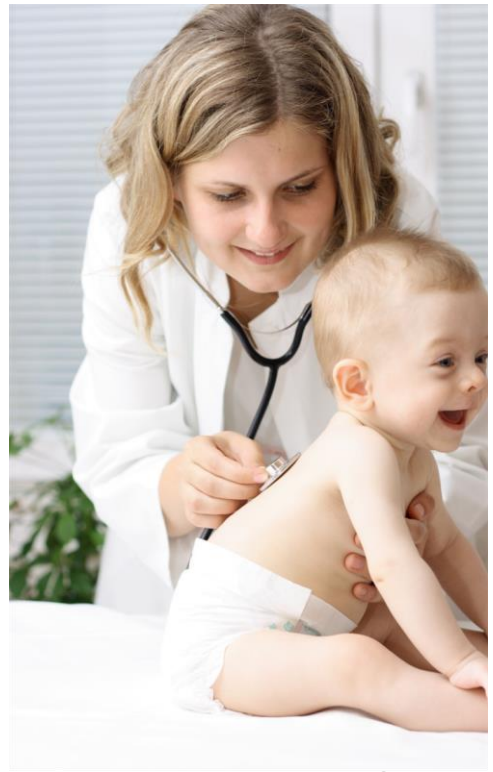
PFAS are a large group of human-made chemicals that have been and continue to be used to make household and commercial products since the 1950's.

PFAS are found in people, fish and wildlife all over the world. Some PFAS do not break down easily and therefore stay in the environment for a very long time, especially in water. Some PFAS can stay in people's bodies for a long time.

Health Effects of PFAS

Exposure to PFAS may result in a wide range of health problems, including:

- Developmental effects, including to fetuses after exposure during pregnancy or postnatal development
- Cancer
- Liver effects
- Immune effects
- Increased cholesterol or other cholesterol changes
- Decreased bone mineral density



The risk of health effects depends on exposure factors and individual factors

The lower your exposure to PFAS, the lower your risk of negative health effects

Some populations are especially sensitive to PFAS

PFAS health effects may be especially harmful to babies, children and people who are pregnant and can impact fetal development

A single exposure during a critical period of development can have lifelong effects.

Preventing PFAS from entering the environment is critical for protecting public health

- PFAS are “forever chemicals” – once in the environment, difficult to get it out
- Continued use of products containing PFAS leads to more of the chemicals in our environment
- More PFAS in the environment results in more exposures and potential for impacts to health
- Approaches that prevent PFAS from entering the environment, like restricting PFAS in products, are critical for reducing exposures and protecting public health