



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, April 7, 2024

### *PFAS: The Forever Chemicals That Are Everywhere*

PFAS (pronounced 'Pee-faz') are “**long-lasting toxic pollutants** that contaminate our country’s waters, harm public health, accumulate in the food chain, poison wildlife, and create environmental injustices for countless communities” (*Waterkeeper Alliance*, 2/14/24). They are “used on all kinds of things we use every day, from raincoats to frying pans – they help make things water-, stain-, and grease-resistant” (Allison Johnson, *Ekō*, 3/26/24).

“**There are thousands of different PFAS**, but only a few have been studied extensively including the long-chain compounds PFOS and PFOA, both of which have been phased out in the U.S. due to health concerns.... However, these compounds remain in the environment, and many of us likely still have measurable amounts in our blood because their half-lives range from about four to nine years....

Notably, in March of 2023, the **EPA announced proposed drinking water standards** for six long- and short-chain PFAS that will, according to the agency, ‘prevent thousands of deaths and reduce tens of thousands of serious PFAS-attributable illnesses’... And in some states including Pennsylvania, steps are being taken to address PFAS.... On February 28, the **FDA announced... that grease-proofing substances can no longer be sold for use in fast-food wrappers, take-out paperboard containers, microwave popcorn bags, pet food bags, and the like....** [This is good news], but it can take up to 18 months for manufacturers to exhaust their stocks.” (*Wellness Letter*, 3/22/24)

#### **What can you do to avoid PFAS?**

“The first step in limiting your exposure to PFAS is to identify the biggest sources in your own home. For many of us, these will be our tap water, cookware, food containers, clothing, home furnishings, and personal care products.

**Filter your water** by using a filtration system that specifically targets PFAS....

**Avoid nonstick cookware.** Consider cookware made from high-quality stainless steel, carbon steel, or cast iron....

**Cut down on take-out food.** Until the FDA’s new ban on PFAS in food packaging is fully in effect, ... you can reduce your exposure... by transferring food out of the original packaging as quickly as possible, never reheating food in the original packaging, and storing leftovers in glass containers.

**Avoid furnishings and other products that claim to be stain- or water-resistant** unless they are labeled “PFAS-free...”

**Opt for personal care products that do not contain PFAS.** Check out [EWG’s robust database](#) of safer personal care products. (*Wellness Letter*, 3/22/24)

The [National Academies](#) provide more information and guidance about PFAS.

#### **Action Step**

[Urge Congress to protect health, waterways, and Creation by passing the PFAS Action Act.](#)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at [socialjustice@holycrossphl.org](mailto:socialjustice@holycrossphl.org).