

# Toxic Chemicals and Pregnancy:

## A focus on perfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS)

### WHAT ARE PFAS CHEMICALS?

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of chemicals that can last in the body and the environment for many years
- PFAS are sometimes called "forever chemicals"
- PFAS have been found in many consumer products and in some drinking water systems in the US

### WHERE ARE PFAS CHEMICALS FOUND?

PFAS chemicals are in many everyday products such as :

- grease-resistant food packaging and paper (pizza boxes & microwave popcorn bags)
- non-stick cookware like pots & pans
- stain & water resistant or repellent fabrics, furniture, and carpets
- makeup and personal care products that say 'fluoro' or 'perfluoro' in the ingredients
- nail polish
- dental floss
- firefighting foam
- contaminated water & food grown with contaminated water or soil

### What possible reproductive health risks may be linked to PFAS exposure?

In pregnant individuals exposed to PFAS, some studies\* suggest a higher chance of:



**miscarriage**



**gestational diabetes**



**lower fertility**



**preeclampsia + high blood pressure**

In children exposed to PFAS during pregnancy, some studies\* suggest a higher chance of:



**weakened immune system**



**low birth weight**



**high cholesterol**

*\*Scientists are still learning more about how these chemicals affect the health of those exposed to them and research is still finding new links between health issues and PFAS exposure.*



## HOW ARE BABIES EXPOSED TO PFAS?

- exposure to the baby across the placenta during pregnancy
- chest milk from individuals exposed to PFAS
- from formula that's made with PFAS-contaminated water

## WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO REDUCE YOUR EXPOSURE TO PFAS CHEMICALS?\*

- Try replacing non-stick pots and pans with stainless steel or cast-iron
- Get rid of old or flaking cookware
- Avoid washing nonstick cookware in the dishwasher
- When possible, choose fresh unprocessed foods & less take-out and delivery
- Pop loose popcorn kernels on the stove instead of in the microwave
- Try your best to stay away from "stain-resistant" and "water-resistant" items like furniture, carpets, and clothing
- If your water system has high levels of PFAS, install or use a water filtration system to remove PFAS from drinking water, or use different water source

*\*The CDC says that most people in the United States have one or more PFAS in their blood. It is not possible to completely avoid PFAS. It is still important to try to reduce your exposure to PFAS chemicals, especially during pregnancy.*

### Resources for more information



Scan for more information about PFAS from the CDC Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry



Scan for the EPA's answers about PFAS in drinking water

Ask your doctor about if you have questions about specific products.