

PFAS: The Ingredient You Never Ordered



Thousands of Rhode Islanders are unknowingly exposed to toxic PFAS “forever chemicals” every time they cook or eat from a Teflon (PTFE) pan. Here’s what you need to know:



What Are PFAS?

PFAS are a class of thousands of man-made “forever chemicals” that **don’t break down** in the environment or the human body. **Health impacts include:** Kidney cancer, liver damage, thyroid disease, weakened immune response, preeclampsia and low birth weight, and more.

Rhode Island’s 2022 PFAS Legislation

In 2022, Rhode Island passed bills banning the intentional addition of PFAS in food packaging and requiring public water systems to test for PFAS.

Rhode Island’s 2024 PFAS Ban

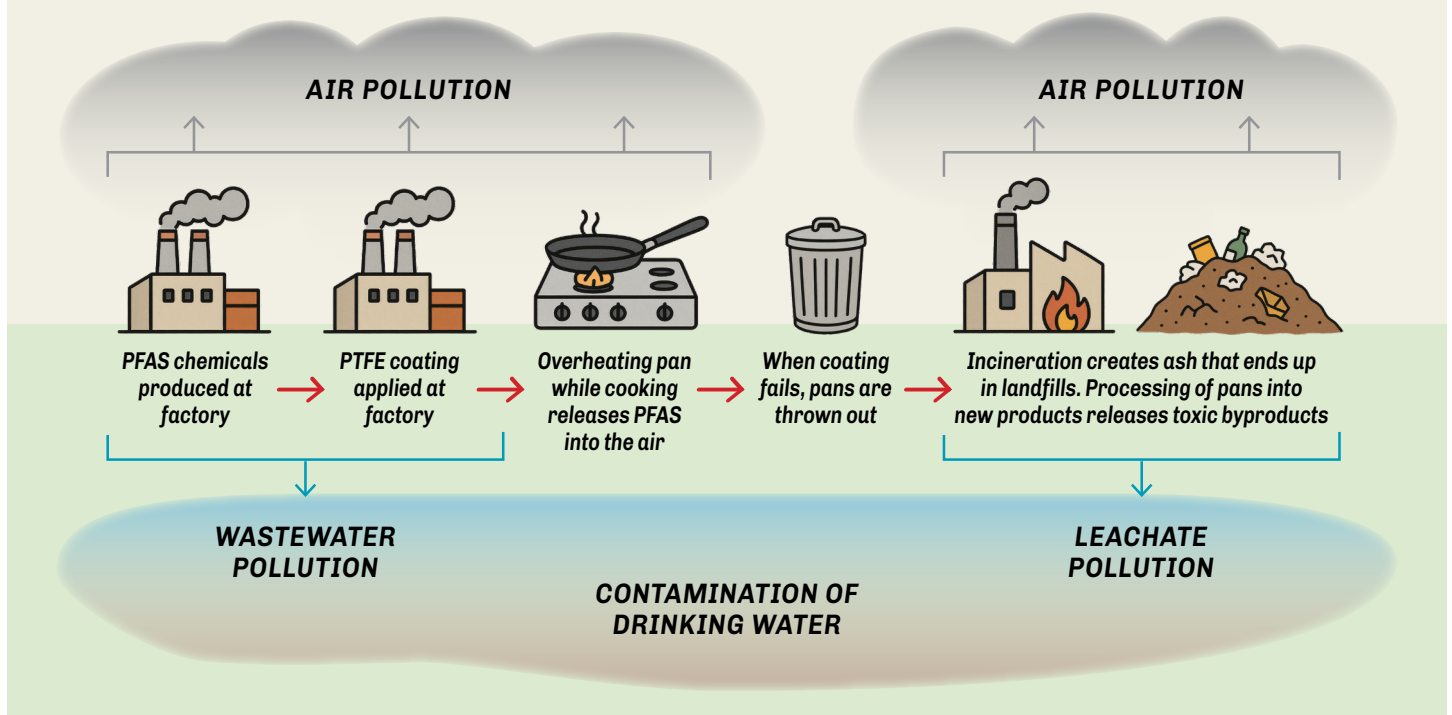
Rhode Island’s PFAS ban is modeled after strong, comprehensive laws passed in other states.

Effective January 1, 2025: Banned the manufacture and use of Class B firefighting foam that contains intentionally added PFAS chemicals.

By January 1, 2027: Bans the manufacture or sale in the state of **cookware**, carpets or rugs, cosmetics, fabric treatments, juvenile products, menstrual products, ski wax, textile articles, or firefighting personal protective equipment that contains intentionally added PFAS.

By January 1, 2029: Bans the manufacture or sale of artificial turf and outdoor apparel for severe wet conditions (unless accompanied by a disclosure of: “Made with PFAS chemicals.”) that contain intentionally added PFAS.

PFAS Pollution from Non-Stick Pans



Industry Pressure

The cookware and chemical industries are working to weaken PFAS laws across the country and exempt cookware from PFAS restrictions. But the facts are clear:

- Safer, PFAS-free cookware already exists — including **stainless steel, ceramic nonstick, carbon steel, and cast iron**.
- Many brands **already make PFAS-free lines** while still lobbying against reform through the **Sustainable Cookware Alliance**.
- **FDA approval ≠ safety**. The FDA's outdated chemical review process allows PFAS in food-contact materials without sufficient testing.
- **PTFE in pacemakers ≠ PTFE in pans**. One saves lives; the other is a convenience — and we have safer options.

The Cost of Doing Nothing

- Cleaning PFAS from wastewater and biosolids is expensive, and the cost is passed to municipalities.
- PFAS costs **\$50–\$1,000 per pound to buy**, but **\$2.7–\$18 million per pound to remove** and destroy.
- PFAS-related health costs in the U.S. are estimated at **\$37–59 billion annually**.¹

What You Need to Know About Nonstick Cookware

- PTFE (used in Teflon) is a plastic PFAS.²
- PTFE coatings flake, scratch, and degrade — releasing microplastics that carry PFAS into your food.^{3,4,5}
- PTFE microplastics have been found in urine and semen and are linked to reduced sperm counts.⁵
- Heated PTFE pans release toxic fumes:
 - Pet birds can die from exposure at just 326°F.⁶
 - **Humans experience “Teflon Flu” — flu-like symptoms after inhaling fumes.**
 - The *Washington Post* reported 267 cases in 2024 alone.

1 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8296683/>

2 <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-03/GenX-Toxicity-Assessment-factsheet-March-2023-update.pdf>

3 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S004896972205392X>

4 <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.3c09524>

5 <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20241001/Study-finds-microplastics-in-semen-and-urine-linking-PTFE-exposure-to-lower-sperm-count.aspx>

6 <https://www.teflon.com/en/consumers/teflon-coatings-cookware-bakeware/safety/bird-safety>

We must protect RI's PFAS Ban

Rhode Island's 2024 law is part of a nationwide movement of states restricting toxic chemicals in the face of federal indifference.

We are inspired by the courage of Amara Strande, a young activist who fought for a ban on PFAS in Minnesota after her and many fellow students developed cancers linked to PFAS contamination of their school's drinking water. Amara tragically died of her cancer, but this fight is her legacy.

**Protect
Rhode
Islanders.
Say NO
to toxic
cookware.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Emily Howe, Rhode Island State Director, Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund
ehowe@cleanwater.org • cleanwater.org/RI