

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS): New opinion from the European Food Safety Authority

The European Authority has derived health-based guidance values for PFAS

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Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are industrial chemicals that have been used for decades in several industrial processes and consumer products due to their special technical properties. They are not easily degradable and are now detectable everywhere: in the environment, in the food chain and in humans. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published an opinion on health risks related to the presence of PFAS in food:

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/de/news/pfas-food-efsa-assesses-risks-and-sets-tolerable-intake>

As early as December 2018, EFSA published a re-evaluation of health risks arising from the presence of certain PFAS in food and derived significantly lower guidance values for two compounds, perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) than before.

In its recent opinion, EFSA has now derived a tolerable weekly intake (TWI) for the sum of four PFAS, namely PFOA, PFOS, perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS) and perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA) of 4.4 nanograms (ng) per kilogram (kg) of body weight per week. This value indicates the amount of a substance that can be ingested weekly over a lifetime with no appreciable health risk.

The TWI derivation is based on observations from epidemiological studies that indicate that these PFAS affect the immune system. In these studies, it was observed that children who had higher concentrations of certain PFAS in their blood serum produced fewer antibodies after having common vaccinations.

Consumers can barely influence their intake of PFAS. The primary sources for human exposure are food and drinking water.

The BfR will examine EFSA's opinion.

The BfR has updated its FAQs on PFAS based on the new EFSA opinion:

https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/frequently_asked_questions_about_per_and_polyfluoroalkyl_substances_pfas_-244188.html

More information on the BfR website on perfluorinated and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS):

https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/a-z_index/poly_and_perfluoroalkyl_substances_pfas_pfc_-130146.html

About the BfR

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in Germany. It advises the German federal government and German federal states ("Laender") on questions of food, chemical and product safety. The BfR conducts its own research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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