Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS) put to the test

BfR Communication No. 027/2018 of 14 August 2018

Per- and polyfluoralkyl substances (PFAS) are industrially manufactured substances which do not occur naturally. They are used in numerous industrial processes and consumer products due to their special technical properties. The various PFAS differ from one another in their carbon chain lengths and the functional groups that exist within the molecule. Because PFAS are difficult to degrade, they are nowadays being detected everywhere – in the environment, in the food chain and in humans. The long-chain compounds perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) are the most commonly examined substances in the subgroup of the perfluoralkyl acids (PFAAs).

The health risk for consumers from the uptake of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) via food is currently being reassessed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). As some questions have arisen regarding the technical relevance of selected scientific studies, the BfR – and its sister institutions – have requested a scientific exchange with EFSA on the interpretation of certain such studies. Once this process has been completed, the BfR will produce an opinion on the reassessment of PFOS and PFOA. This assessment will pay due consideration to various population groups, including infants.

Until then, the BfR points to the advantages of breastfeeding formulated by the National Breastfeeding Committee in Germany:
https://www.bfr.bund.de/de/grundsaetzliches_zum_stillen-10199.html

Up to date, no scientific committee anywhere in the world has recommended a restriction of breastfeeding following the available findings on perfluorinated compounds:
https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/docs/pfas_clinician_fact_sheet_508.pdf

This text version is a translation of the original German text which is the only legally binding version.