

The family tree of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

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Names and abbreviations

This fact sheet tells you about chemical names within the family of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and their basic chemical structure. It also spells out abbreviations for common PFAS.

PFAS are a family of man-made chemicals that contain carbon, fluorine, and other elements.

The family tree image below, Figure 1, shows some of the different families of PFAS. For simplicity, it does not include all PFAS subfamilies. Follow along – starting at the “fallen apple” of PFC and then continuing up the tree trunk into the branches.

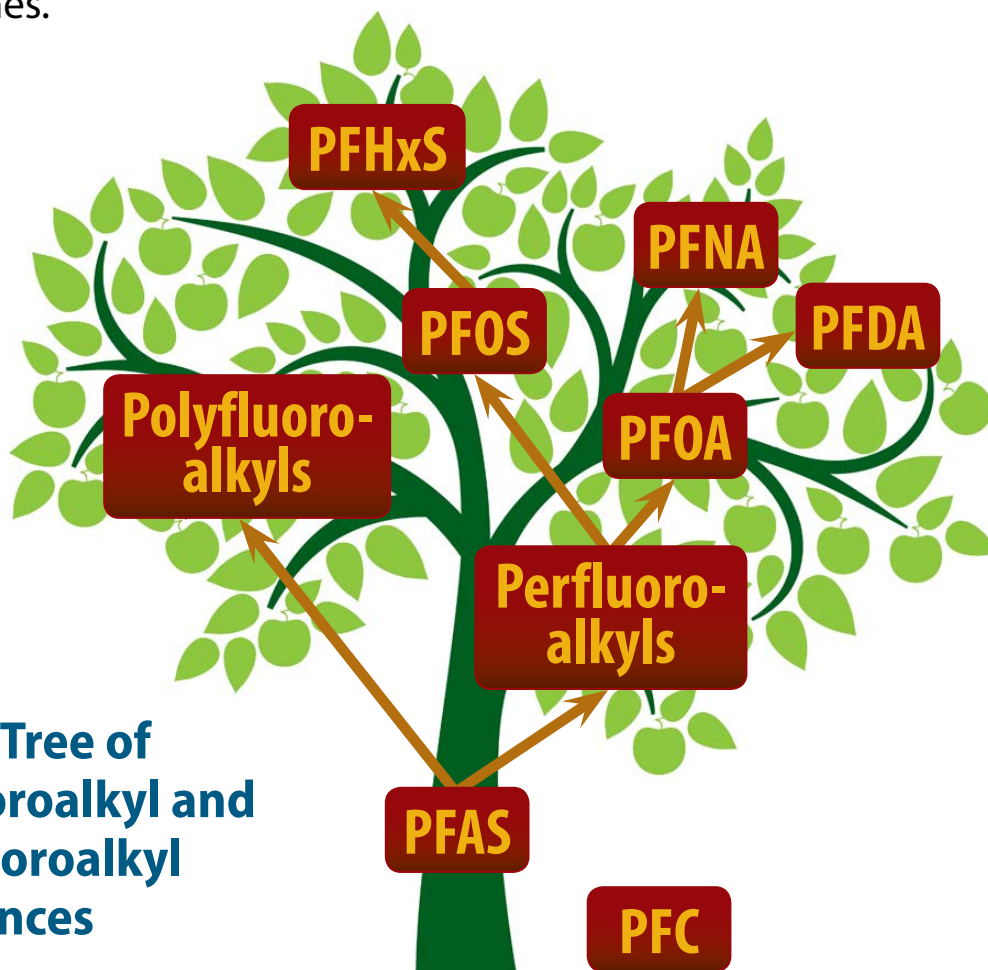


Figure 1.

Family Tree of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances

PFC

In the past, scientists used the abbreviation PFC to stand for perfluorinated chemicals.

However, using the abbreviation PFC can be confusing because it is also an abbreviation for perfluorocarbons. Perfluorocarbons are an entirely different family of chemicals, also known as greenhouse gases.

The term PFC has fallen off the family tree, but it remains in the diagram as a reminder of past use. You may still see informational materials using the term “PFC” instead of PFAS.

PFAS

Perfluoroalkyl substances and polyfluoroalkyl substances are called PFAS for short. The PFAS family includes hundreds of chemicals. The different structures of the PFAS molecules are the basis for different chemical properties and different chemical names. See Table 1 for abbreviations and chemical names.

Table 1. Common PFAS: Abbreviations, names, and subfamily

Abbreviation	Chemical name	Other names	Subfamily
PFOS	Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid		Perfluoroalkyl
PFOA	Perfluorooctanoic acid	C8	Perfluoroalkyl
PFNA	Perfluorononanoic acid		Perfluoroalkyl
PFDA	Perfluorodecanoic acid		Perfluoroalkyl
FOSA	Perfluorooctane sulfonamide	PFOSA	Perfluoroalkyl
MeFOSAA	2-(N-Methyl-perfluorooctane sulfonamido) acetic acid	Me-PFOSA-AcOH	Polyfluoroalkyl
EtFOSAA	2-(N-Ethyl-perfluorooctane sulfonamido) acetic acid	Et-PFOSA-AcOH	Polyfluoroalkyl
PFHxS	Perfluorohexane sulfonic acid		Perfluoroalkyl