

Nonstick Cookware

Why we care

Nonstick pans reduce the need for cooking with oil or butter and are a breeze to clean, but at what cost? When heated to a high temperature (there is controversy about how high), the surface on Teflon-coated and other nonstick cookware breaks apart and emits a toxic chemical. This chemical is in a family of manmade chemicals called PFCs, which have been used for decades to make products that resist water, stains, and grease. Some are very persistent in the environment, can remain in the human body for years, and are particularly toxic to birds. Common uses include nonstick cookware and stain-resistant carpets and fabrics. The EPA is concerned about these chemicals and has worked out an agreement with manufacturers to phase out one of them by 2015. In the meantime, the products are still on store shelves and in our homes. For more information, visit <http://www.ewg.org/node/18762>.

Simple, positive change

Environmental Working Group, a Washington DC-based nonprofit, suggests the following steps to avoid these chemicals.

- Use stainless steel, cast iron, enameled cast iron, or Pyrex cookware.
- Never let nonstick cookware get too hot (don't preheat empty pans or use them in the broiler), and always use an exhaust fan.
- Avoid clothing with Scotchgard or Gore-Tex tags.
- Forgo the optional stain treatment on new carpets and furniture.
- For more information, visit <http://www.ewg.org/healthy-home-tips-06>.

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