

Think Twice Before Wearing Makeup: Toxic Chemicals in “Wear Resistant” & “Long Lasting” Cosmetics

(main sources include the [Department of Health](#), [Department of Ecology](#) and [Center for Disease Control](#) websites)

During the pandemic, with many of us physically interacting with very few people much of the time -- and behind masks when we left home -- it was common for many to stop some of their regular appearance-related practices, including wearing makeup. Now that COVID restrictions are lifting and we're starting to return to our pre-pandemic routines such as heading into the workplace, socializing with our friends and communities and “dressing up” for parties and special occasions, we might be wearing makeup again.



However, consider thinking twice before wearing makeup: [this recent study](#) of 231 cosmetics found that more than half of the products tested contained one or more of a potentially toxic family of chemical substances called PFAS, including more than 80% of waterproof mascaras, more than 60% of foundations and liquid lipsticks, and about 60% of eye and lip products (see [graphic](#)). Even more concerning, the majority of these cosmetics do not list PFAS as an ingredient on their label, so the most careful label-readers would not be able to avoid these products. The serious concerns raised in this study were cited by the sponsors when they introduced the [No PFAS in Cosmetics Act](#) in the Senate.

Exposure to PFAS has been linked to a wide variety of harmful health outcomes including: increased risk of kidney or testicular cancer, increased cholesterol levels, reduced birth weights, decreased vaccine response in children [and more](#). PFAS have been widely used since the 1950s to manufacture consumer products such as non-stick cookware, water-resistant clothing, and stain resistant fabrics and carpets, as well as some firefighting foams used by the military and local fire departments. During production and use, PFAs can migrate into the soil, water and air and [are considered “forever” chemicals](#) because they do not break down easily and will persist for hundreds or thousands of years. Given its longtime, ubiquitous usage, nearly everyone in the U.S. has some type of PFAS in their blood. And, with groundwater contamination a significant concern as 43 states have PFAS-contaminated drinking water, affecting 19 million people, the EPA is considering [setting a maximum level for PFAS](#) nationwide.

To reduce your exposure to PFAS:

- If you want to wear makeup, unless/until labelling improves, avoid cosmetics with PFAS by avoiding cosmetics advertised with words and phrases such as “wear resistant,” “long lasting” and “water proof/resistant”.
- For ideas to avoid PFAS exposure from other potential sources, check out the Department of Ecology’s [video](#) and [flyer](#)

Please remember that the EAP is here to support you – don’t hesitate to reach out to us, at 1-877-313-4455 or [online](#).

Be Smoke Ready! Protecting Your Health During Wildfire Season

(adapted from the [Washington State Department of Health's Public Health Connection page](#))

It's summer in the Pacific Northwest, so it's time to prepare for wildfire season and the smoke that comes along with it. Wildfire smoke seasons can be unpredictable. In some years, the smoke is very bad, but in other years it's not. It's always best to be prepared and "smoke ready" to protect ourselves and our families. *Smoke ready* means having the knowledge and ability to stay safe and healthy during periods of poor air quality due to smoke from fires.

What can you do *now* to be ready for wildfire smoke?

1. Know how to access forecast and current air quality conditions

Stay informed about air quality conditions. This will help you make decisions to protect you and your family. For information on wildfire activity and air quality conditions, visit the Washington State Smoke Blog: <https://wasmoke.blogspot.com/>.

2. Know what's in smoke and why it's bad for health

Wildfire smoke is made of many things, but the main pollutant we track to measure air quality impacts are fine particles called particulate matter (PM). PM can be inhaled deeply into your lungs and cause irritation. Due to its small particle size, PM can also enter your bloodstream.

3. Know the health effects and symptoms of exposure to smoke and who is at risk

Breathing in wildfire smoke can result in minor to serious health effects. Some of the minor symptoms include eye, nose, and throat irritation, headaches, wheezing, coughing, and shortness of breath. More serious symptoms can include worsening of pre-existing chronic conditions like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or asthma.

While smoke is unhealthy for everyone, there are some people who are especially sensitive to smoke. Infants and children, pregnant women, adults over 65, and people with heart and lung disease may develop more severe health problems from smoke. If you have a respiratory infection or COVID-19, smoke can make your symptoms worse since both impact your respiratory and immune systems.

4. Know how to reduce exposure to smoke and have the resources and ability to do so

The best way to protect you and your family's health is to reduce exposure to smoke. This starts by staying inside and keeping your indoor air clean. Take the following steps when indoors:

- Close your windows and doors when it's smoky outside.
- Improve the filtration of indoor air in your home. Here are three ways: (1) upgrade your home HVAC system filtration to a MERV 13 filter (or the best your system can handle), (2) buy a HEPA portable air cleaner, or (3) build a DIY box fan filter.
✓ *There are technical details involved with all of these options, so do your research in advance.*
- Don't add to indoor air pollution: avoid burning candles or incense, using essential oil diffusers, smoking inside, or vacuuming (unless your vacuum has a HEPA filter).
- Remember to buy necessary materials, like MERV filters before you need them -- supplies will sell quickly once the smoke hits.

For more information about wildfire smoke and health, ways to reduce exposure, and impacts of COVID-19, visit the Department of Health's Smoke from Fires [webpage](#).

For more information about this and a wide variety of health-related topics, check out the Department of Health's [Public Health Connection page](#), or [sign up](#) to be notified whenever new articles are posted.