

Toxic “Forever Chemicals” in Reusable Menstrual Products: A Hidden Threat for People with MCS

What Are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large family of synthetic chemicals commonly called “**forever chemicals**” because they do not break down easily in the human body or the environment. PFAS are used to make products resistant to stains, water, and heat—such as non-stick pans, outdoor clothing, and certain personal care items.

Research has linked PFAS to serious health problems, including hormone disruption, immune system effects, and some cancers—making them especially concerning for people with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS).

What’s Going On?

A recent study in *Environmental Science & Technology Letters* (Indiana University and the University of Notre Dame) found:

- **30%** of reusable menstrual and incontinence products (period underwear, reusable pads, menstrual cups) contained PFAS at levels suggesting intentional use of the compounds.
- **33%** of period underwear and **25%** of reusable pads contained fluorine at levels of concern.

Why does this matter? PFAS are **persistent, bioaccumulative, and harmful**, with risks ranging from hormone disruption to cancer. Their “neutral” chemical forms—which have not been well studied or regulated—are especially concerning because they can be absorbed more easily by the skin and vaginal tissues.

Why PFAS Are Used

PFAS are added to fabrics to make them **stain-, water-, and odour-resistant**—features often marketed as “eco” or “leak-proof.” But these chemicals are unnecessary: many safe products tested contained **no PFAS**, proving alternatives exist.

Why This Matters for People with MCS

For individuals with MCS, exposure through menstrual products is particularly worrying because of:

- **Extended skin contact:** These products stay in direct contact with sensitive skin and tissues for long periods.
- **Lack of transparency:** PFAS are rarely disclosed on labels, making informed choices nearly impossible.
- **Environmental persistence:** PFAS contaminate water and food systems, creating ongoing indirect exposures.

Safer Choices for Everyone, including MCS-Sensitive Consumers

If you live with MCS, consider:

- **Cloth pads made from natural fibers** such as organic cotton or hemp—PFAS-free, biodegradable, and more suitable for sensitive individuals.
- **Products independently verified as PFAS-free**—when possible, contact manufacturers or look for reliable certifications.

For healthy alternatives, please visit the [EcoLiving Guide](#) on menstrual products.

References

Udasin, S. (2025, July 22). Toxic pfas found in reusable menstrual products.
<https://thehill.com/policy/equilibrium-sustainability/5412276-toxic-forever-chemicals-pfas-reusable-period-menstrual-products/>