

PFAS in Drinking Water

What are PFAS?

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a family of human-made chemicals that have been widely used in consumer products.
- PFAS can be measured in the blood of most people around the world, including Minnesotans.
- PFAS can make its way into drinking water from past industrial disposal or spills.
- You cannot see, taste, or smell PFAS in drinking water.
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) tests community water systems for PFAS.
- The only way to know if a private well has PFAS is to have it tested.

How can PFAS affect my health?

Consuming water with PFAS levels about health-based guidance values can increase risk of health effects such as:

- Higher cholesterol
- Changes to liver function
- Reduced immune response
- Thyroid disease
- Kidney and testicular cancer (for PFOA)



What level of PFAS in drinking water is safe?

MDH uses health-based values to evaluate health risks from individual PFAS. Health guidance values are designed to protect the most vulnerable populations for up to a lifetime of exposure. If more than one PFAS is found in drinking water, MDH evaluates their additive health risk using the Health Risk Index.

There is little to no health risk from drinking water with PFAS levels at or below guidance values. Drinking water with a PFAS Health Risk Index under one presents little to no health risk.

Drinking water with PFAS levels above guidance values or the Health Risk Index poses a potential health concern. It does not represent an immediate health risk. The guidance values are based on multiple safety factors and are overprotective for most people.

There are Safe Drinking Water Act standards for certain PFAS. The Minnesota health-based values are lower than the federal standards because they only consider health and do not take into account the cost or feasibility of drinking water treatment. Drinking water that meets federal standards is safe to drink for most people. People of a certain age or with special health conditions can take extra precautions, such as for a fetus or an infant.

Community water systems with elevated PFAS can take actions to reduce PFAS levels. These systems can lower PFAS levels through treatment or reduced pumping from contaminated wells.

What are the PFAS levels in my drinking water?

To see PFAS testing results in community water systems, visit [Interactive Dashboard for PFAS Testing in Drinking Water](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/pfasmap.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/pfasmap.html>).

To learn more about testing private wells for PFAS, safe levels in drinking water, health effects, and ongoing activities, visit [Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/topics/pfcs.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/topics/pfcs.html>).

How else can I be exposed to PFAS?

For most people, consumer products that are grease, oil, stain and/or water resistant are a much greater source of PFAS exposure than drinking water. PFAS chemicals are commonly used in non-stick and stain-resistant consumer products, food packaging, fire-fighting foam, and industrial processes. People can also be exposed to PFAS through eating food packaged in material that contains PFAS, eating fish caught from water contaminated by PFOS, or eating food grown or raised near places with PFAS exposure. For most Minnesotans, the majority of PFOS exposure comes from non-drinking water sources.

PFOA can also pass from mother to infant during pregnancy and during breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is a healthy activity for both baby and parent. If you have concerns about possible risks from PFOA during breastfeeding, consult with your physician.

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R5/2024

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