

Important information about PFAS



What are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of manmade chemicals used to make coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. The unique properties of these chemicals led to widespread use in numerous products. PFAS are in clothing, furniture, adhesives, food packaging, heat-resistant non-stick cooking surfaces, and fire-suppressing foam.

Many PFAS are a concern because they:

- do not break down in the environment,
- can move through soils and contaminate drinking water sources,
- build up (bioaccumulate) in fish and wildlife.

The two most studied types of PFAS are perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

PFOS was the key ingredient in Scotchgard and numerous stain repellents. PFOA was used in the manufacture of consumer goods such as Teflon. In the United States, PFOS and PFOA were phased out in the early 2000s, however, they are still produced internationally and can be imported into the United States in consumer products such as carpeting, clothing, and packaging.

What are the risks?

According to the EPA and MDH, drinking water with our levels of PFAS is not considered a health risk.

Studies have shown that PFAS can accumulate and stay in the body for long periods of time and that elevated exposure to PFAS may lead to adverse health impacts. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), PFAS may contribute to decreased fertility, hormonal changes, increased cholesterol, weakened immune system response, increased cancer risk, and growth and learning delays in infants and children. During several national surveys, PFOA and PFOS were found in the blood of nearly all people tested. However, the CDC has found that PFOA and PFOS blood levels have steadily decreased in U.S. residents since 1999 (CDC, 2019).

How is someone exposed to PFAS?

Drinking water with very low levels of PFAS is not considered to be the main cause of concern for exposure. People are exposed to PFAS primarily through eating food or drinking beverages made with contaminated water and exposure to PFAS in dust or consumer products. According to the EPA and MDH, drinking water with our levels of PFAS is not considered a health risk.

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