



PFAS and Private Wells: Common Questions

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What are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large family of chemicals in use since the 1940s. They are used to make a wide variety of stain-resistant, water-resistant, and non-stick products like food packaging, carpets, outdoor clothing, and non-stick pans. PFAS have many other industrial uses because of their special properties. In Washington, a special type of firefighting foam is linked to PFAS in groundwater in several areas. We are concerned about PFAS because they don't break down naturally and may harm human health.

How do I know if there are PFAS in my water?

Ask your local health department if PFAS have been found in groundwater in your area. Being close to a contaminated site may help you decide whether or not to test. The only way to know for sure is to test your water. If you choose to test, find a lab accredited by our state Department of Ecology to test for PFAS in drinking water. A [list of accredited labs \(331-700\)](#) is on our website. Carefully follow the laboratory's directions for collecting your water sample and sending it to the lab.

When should I take action?

If your test results show PFAS above a Washington State Action Level, take action to bring the amount of PFAS below the SALs for long term drinking.

The Washington State Board of Health set State Action Levels (SALs) for five PFAS in October 2021. The PFAS SALs were set to protect health over years of water consumption. They also guide consumption over shorter periods (months) by sensitive groups.

Type of PFAS	State Action Level (SAL) in parts per trillion (ppt)*
PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid)	10
PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonic acid)	15
PFHxS (perfluorohexane sulfonic acid)	65
PFNA (perfluorononanoic acid)	9
PFBS (perfluorobutane sulfonic acid)	345

**Parts per trillion is the same as ng/L in water test results.*

Health advice continues to develop as scientists learn more about the health effects of PFAS. In June 2022, EPA announced new interim health advice. EPA now advises that any detectable levels of PFOA and PFOA in drinking water are a potential health concern when consumed over years. Although this advice is still undergoing scientific review, people may wish to take action if any PFOS and PFOA are detected.

How can I reduce PFAS in my drinking water?

- ◆ You can install and maintain a home water filter to reduce PFAS levels in your water. See our factsheet on PFAS filters.

- Alternately, you may be able to connect to a nearby public water system or private well that doesn't have PFAS.
- Contact your county health department to explore your options.

Should I drink and cook with alternate water, such as bottled water, until PFAS are below the SALs?

We recommend that **young children and people who are pregnant or breastfeeding** use another source of water for drinking, cooking, and preparing formula when PFAS are above a SAL. These groups may be especially sensitive to harmful health effects of PFAS and drink more water per pound of body weight than most people.

Bottled water can also be a good short-term solution for anyone wanting to reduce their PFAS exposure while a longer-term solution is put into place. In general, the sooner you lower your exposure, the sooner the level of PFAS retained in your body can start to go down.

If you use bottled water as an alternate water source, look for brands that have been purified with water filtration. PFAS have been found in some brands of bottled water.

Can I boil my water to get rid of PFAS?

No, you cannot boil PFAS out of water.

Can I bathe if there are PFAS in my tap water?

Yes. PFAS in tap water do not go through the skin very well. Showering or bathing are not a meaningful source of PFAS exposure.

Can I wash dishes and do laundry if there are PFAS in my tap water?

Yes. Doing laundry or washing dishes is not a meaningful source of PFAS exposure.

More information

If you have specific health concerns, talk to your health care provider.

To learn more about PFAS, visit [PFAS webpage](#) where you'll find more information and links to other resources.



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