

Contaminants in Drinking Water: PFAS

What are PFAS?

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a large group of manufactured chemicals that are used in a wide variety of industries and products. These chemicals last a long time in the environment and can affect your health.

Why are PFAS used?

PFAS have useful properties like stain prevention and waterproofing. They are often used in:

- Firefighting foam
- Water-resistant clothing and other fabrics
- Firefighting foam
- Food packaging (such as microwave popcorn bags, pizza boxes, and candy wrappers)
- Non-stick cookware
- Paints and sealants

How do people get exposed to PFAS?

PFAS in water and soil can seep into plants, animals, and fish. People can be exposed PFAS by eating food or drinking water with PFAS in it.

How do PFAS affect people?

- Decrease fertility (makes it harder for people to get pregnant)
- Increase chances of getting high blood pressure during pregnancy
- Increase chances of babies born with low birth weight
- Lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness
- Increase chances of getting certain cancers

Why test your drinking water for PFAS?

- Drinking water is a common way people can get PFAS in their bodies
- Once in your body, PFAS can affect your health in negative ways
- If you find PFAS in your drinking water, there are things you can do to protect your health

Where can I learn more about PFAS?

For more information on PFAS or for technical assistance, contact GLITEC (Great Lakes Inter Tribal Epidemiology Center) at 715-588-3324 or consult your local health department.

Sources:

United States Environmental Protection Agency. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). <https://www.epa.gov/pfas>. Updated March 2023. Accessed June 2023.

