



# PFAS and PFOS: what do I need to know?

Provided by the Academic Public Health Corps



## What are PFAS/PFOS?

PFAS are man-made chemicals that are difficult to filter out of water, which is why they are often referred to as "forever chemicals". The most common and well-studied of these are PFOA and PFOS. PFAS can be found in many contexts, like firefighting foam, nonstick surfaces, food packaging, and industrial processes.

## Are there any health risks?

Research on the safety concerns with PFAS is still ongoing, but this is what we know so far:

- Immune compromised people, pregnant people, and children should avoid exposure when PFAS levels are high
- Long term exposure to PFAS over the life course can cause increase risk of kidney and other cancers, increased cholesterol, and reduced immune response
- People trying to become pregnant may be less likely to conceive
- Children may experience growth or other developmental delays

## Are there state or federal limits for PFAS in drinking water?

Yes! As of June 15, 2022, the limits proposed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are:

- PFOA: 0.004 ppt (parts per trillion)
- PFOS: 0.02 ppt

## How to reduce exposure?

If the level of PFAS in your water is above safe limits, avoid drinking your tap water or cooking with it, using it to make formula, or using it to brush your teeth or wash fruit and vegetables.

Do NOT boil water as this INCREASES the total level of PFAS due to evaporation.

## What can I do if...

### I have town water?

You can contact your local water company for information on PFAS levels and their recommendations. This information must be publicly available.

### I have well water?

Well water should be tested if you live within 1-2 miles of a known source of PFAS or whether other water sources are known to be contaminated with PFAS.

If there is PFAS in your water, there are water treatment devices you can use with your well to filter out the PFAS to safer levels.

## Learn More

Well Water information:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-in-private-well-drinking-water-supplies-faq>

EPA regulations and recommendations:

<https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos>

