

PFAS In Private Wells

Key Takeaways

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are commonly found in the environment and have been detected in public drinking water and in private wells.
- People are exposed to PFAS in water mainly through drinking and foods prepared with that water. Household uses, such as cleaning, washing, and bathing, do not result in significant exposure.
- Like many contaminants, New York State does not regulate PFAS in private wells. The state's highly protective public drinking water standards for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) are used as guidelines to recommend actions to reduce exposures in private wells.
- Using a water filter for your drinking water can decrease your exposure to PFAS. Given the expense of testing, some people may choose this option.
- Email the New York State Department of Health (DOH) at BEEI@health.ny.gov or call (518) 402-7860 to find out if PFAS contamination is present in your area and what steps are recommended. They can provide advice on PFAS testing, interpretation of sample results, or appropriate options to reduce PFAS exposures from private wells.
- For questions about ongoing New York State investigations to address PFAS in the environment, email derweb@dec.ny.gov or call 518-402-9759
- DOH continues to work with other federal agencies and researchers across the country. Read more at www.health.ny.gov/chemicalsandhealth.

PFAS in Drinking Water

Public health agencies and New Yorkers have become increasingly aware of PFAS in the environment. PFAS have been detected in drinking water near where these chemicals were manufactured, used, or disposed of in New York State and in the U.S. Read more at www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/108831.html.

DOH regulates two commonly found PFAS contaminants in public drinking water supplies. PFOA and PFOS drinking water standards or “maximum contaminant levels (MCLs)” are set at 10 parts per trillion (or nanograms per liter) each for public water supplies. These standards are among the lowest in the country and are highly protective against health effects. DOH also requires public water systems to test for several other commonly found PFAS compounds when PFOA or PFOS are detected. Read more about **Public Water Systems and NYS Drinking Water Standards for PFOA, PFOS and 1,4-Dioxane** at www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/docs/water_supplier_fact_sheet_new_mcls.pdf.

New York State does not regulate PFAS contaminants in private wells. DOH uses public drinking water standards as guidance when evaluating private well data and recommending actions to reduce exposure. Learn more about protecting your private well at www.health.ny.gov/privatewells.

About PFAS and Health

PFAS are human-made chemicals used since the 1950s in a variety of products, including some cosmetics; water, grease, and oil-resistant products; and some fire-fighting foams. PFAS can travel through soil into groundwater, and then into sources of drinking water.

The available information on the health risks associated with PFAS, like many chemicals, comes mostly from studies of high-level exposure in laboratory animals. Less is known about the chances of human health effects occurring from lower levels of exposure, such as from drinking water.

High dose studies in animals indicate that exposure to water with PFAS can cause a wide range of health effects with the most consistent findings being effects on the liver, immune system, and impaired fetal growth and development. The United States Environmental Protection Agency considers PFOA and PFOS as having suggestive evidence for causing cancer based on studies of animals exposed to high levels of this chemical over their lifetimes.

When PFAS is found in drinking water, the main exposure is typically from ingesting water through drinking and eating foods prepared with that water. Household uses such as cleaning, dishwashing, showering and bathing, do not result in significant exposure.

Biomonitoring projects which test people's blood, such as The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), show that human exposure to PFAS is widespread. Nearly all people in the United States have some PFAS in their body. DOH continues working with other federal agencies and researchers across the country to learn more about the complex relationship between PFAS exposure and health. Read more at www.health.ny.gov/chemicalsandhealth.

Recommendations for Private Well Testing

New York State's Water Quality Rapid Response Team, led by DOH and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), investigates water contamination reports and takes actions to remediate sources and reduce exposures. This team has been working to identify and address drinking water issues across the state, including testing public water and private wells around sites that are known sources of PFAS.

Email DOH at bee@health.ny.gov or call or call 518-402-7860 to find out if PFAS contamination in drinking water is present in your area and what steps are recommended. They can provide advice on PFAS testing, interpretation of sample results, or appropriate options to reduce PFAS exposures from private wells.

Testing for PFAS can be expensive. Tests may range from \$300-\$600. PFAS tests are performed by a small number of certified laboratories that have specialized equipment and quality control procedures. This enables them to accurately test for PFAS at very low levels. Homeowners should discuss sample collection procedures with the laboratory prior to obtaining bottles. Some laboratories may collect the sample for you for a fee.

Water Treatment Options for Private Wells

You can install a water filter to decrease levels of PFAS in your drinking water. Given the expense of testing, some people may choose to install a filter rather than test for PFAS. Water filtration units that use granulated activated carbon (GAC, also called charcoal filters) and reverse osmosis (RO) can be effective in removing PFAS chemicals from drinking water. These units range from relatively inexpensive filtered water pitchers to larger systems. Read more about in-home water filtration options for household drinking water at www.health.ny.gov/privatewells.

Questions?

- For information and advice on testing your well including laboratories that conduct PFAS testing, questions about sample results, or appropriate options to reduce PFAS exposures from private wells, email bee@health.ny.gov or call 518-402-7860.
- For health risks associated with PFAS in your water, email bt@health.ny.gov or call 518-402-7800
- For questions about ongoing New York State investigations to address PFAS in the environment, email derweb@dec.ny.gov or call 518-402-9759.