

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 levels of PFAS in Minneapolis' drinking water?

In September of 2023, Minneapolis Water Treatment & Distribution Services (WTDS) tested its drinking water for 26 PFAS compounds. 4 compounds were detected at extremely low levels. The compounds were:

- PFBA at 8.8 parts per trillion (ppt)
- PFPeA at 2.3 ppt
- PFHxA at 2.1 ppt
- PFBS at 2.5 ppt

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) health guidance value for PFBA is 7000 ppt, PFHxA is 200 ppt and PFBS is 100 ppt. Currently there is no health value for PFPeA.

WTDS's levels are far below the MDH health guidance values. Based on this information, the MDH states our water is safe to drink.

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.

What is Minneapolis doing about PFAS?

WTDS began monitoring for PFAS in 2015. Early testing did not detect any PFAS in our water. With improved analytical methods, we are now able to detect a few of the PFAS compounds at very low levels.

In 2023, we began quarterly monitoring for 29 PFAS compounds as part of the EPA's Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule 5. These results will dictate how frequently we will test for PFAS in the future. We will post these results in 2024 as they become available from MDH.

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