

PFAS in Drinking Water



The NC PFAS Testing (PFAST) Network tested a well in the Maysville drinking water system for 55 chemicals and found levels above the US EPA recommendation for two chemicals, PFOA and PFOS, and similar levels of PFHxS.

PFOA=perfluorooctanoic acid ♦ PFOS=perfluorooctane sulfonic acid ♦ PFHxS=perfluorohexane sulfonic acid

What are PFAS?

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a large class of human-made chemicals that includes PFOA, PFOS, and PFHxS, as well as newer compounds like GenX. **PFAS are used in industry, firefighting, and commercial products that are resistant to water, grease, and stains.** PFAS are of concern because they can persist in water for a long time, and the health implications of PFAS in drinking water are not well established.

How can drinking water that contains PFAS affect your health?

PFOA and PFOS have been studied much more than the thousands of other PFAS known to exist. Health effects associated with PFOA and PFOS include elevated cholesterol, altered liver function, reduced thyroid levels, and reduced immune response to vaccines, some cancers (kidney and testicular), ulcerative colitis, and increased blood pressure during pregnancy.



What is considered a high level of PFAS?

The US Environmental Protection Agency set a **health advisory level of 70 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water.** The health advisory level is the combined concentration of both chemicals that protects people from harmful effects of exposure to PFAS in drinking water. Health advisories are based on current scientific research, but are non-enforceable and non-regulatory.

How do we measure PFAS in people?

Some PFAS can be measured in people using a blood test, though most laboratories do not provide this service. Some PFAS do not stay in the body long, and a blood test cannot identify these chemicals. **Blood test results will tell you how much of each PFAS is in your blood on the day you are tested.** Currently, there is no information that can be used to interpret what levels in blood may be associated with harmful health effects.

How long can PFAS stay in our bodies?

Some PFAS can stay in your body for many years, while others are more rapidly removed from the body. If you are no longer exposed to PFAS, the amount of PFAS in your body will decrease gradually over time.

Where can I find more information?

ATSDR: <http://bit.ly/PFASfaq>
NC DEQ: <http://bit.ly/PFASHealth>
NC PFAST Network: <https://ncpfastnetwork.com/>
US EPA: <http://bit.ly/HealthAdvisoryLevel>

