

Talking to Your Healthcare Provider about Exposure to PFAS

Accessible Link: <https://atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/talk-to-your-healthcare-provider.html>

If you have been exposed to perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and are concerned about your health, you can talk to your healthcare provider.

You can share this fact sheet with your healthcare provider to help start a conversation about how PFAS can affect your health.



PFAS are a large, complex group of synthetic chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products around the world since the 1940s. They are used to make various everyday products. For example, PFAS are used to keep food from sticking to packaging or cookware, make clothes and carpets resistant to stains, and create firefighting foam that is more effective.

In communities affected by PFAS-contaminated drinking water, water can be the main source of exposure. For other communities, the primary exposure sources can vary.

For more information, please see the [Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry \(ATSDR\) PFAS webpage](#). For information on occupational exposures, please visit the [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\) PFAS webpage](#).

1. How can I be exposed to PFAS?

Nearly everyone in the United States has some amount of PFAS in their blood. PFAS can get into our bodies when we

- drink contaminated water,
- eat foods from areas with contaminated soil or water,
- accidentally swallow contaminated soil or dust,
- eat foods wrapped in material that contains PFAS, and
- accidentally swallow residue or dust from PFAS-containing consumer products such as stain resistant carpeting and water repellent clothing.

Young children may be more likely to get PFAS in their bodies because they tend to chew on toys and fabrics and often put their hands into their mouths. They might also drink formula made with PFAS-contaminated water or drink breastmilk from a person who has elevated PFAS in their body. PFAS can be transferred from the mother to the baby during pregnancy.

2. Can exposure to PFAS cause health problems?

Some PFAS have been linked to some health problems in humans including higher cholesterol, lower birth weights, lower immune response to vaccines, kidney and testicular cancer, high blood pressure in pregnancy, and changes in liver function.

If you are concerned about PFAS exposures, talk to your healthcare provider.

ATSDR has developed [information for clinicians](#) that you can share with your provider and work together to determine the best path forward based on your unique circumstances.

3. Should my family and I get a blood test for PFAS?

Nearly all people in the United States have measurable amounts of PFAS in their blood. PFAS blood test results will tell you how much of certain (not all) PFAS are in your blood, but it is unclear what the results mean in terms of possible health effects. Testing may help some individuals understand if they are exposed to certain PFAS and help guide exposure reduction. Testing for PFAS may also provide peace of mind. Your healthcare provider can help you consider the benefits, risks, and limitations of PFAS blood testing and help you determine the appropriate next steps based on your unique needs.



National Center
for Environmental Health
Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry

4. Should my family and I be tested for any of the health conditions possibly linked to PFAS exposure?

If you are concerned about PFAS exposures, talk with your healthcare provider about your individual risks, whether additional health screening is appropriate for you, and the risks and benefits of additional testing.

ATSDR has developed [educational materials](#) for healthcare providers about PFAS.

5. How will exposure to PFAS in drinking water affect my pregnancy?

Research suggests that higher exposure to certain PFAS may be associated with pregnancy-induced hypertension and preeclampsia.

Checking for high blood pressure should be part of your routine care during pregnancy. It is important to go to all of your checkups and discuss any concerns with your healthcare provider.

6. Can I breastfeed my baby if I've been exposed to PFAS in drinking water?

With numerous protective health benefits, breast milk continues to be the ideal nutrition for infants, and in nearly every circumstance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that nursing mothers continue to breastfeed their babies despite the potential presence of environmental contaminants. Your healthcare provider can assist you in making the decision whether to breastfeed based on your and your child's specific situation. For more information about PFAS and breastfeeding, please visit <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/pfas-breastfeeding.html>.

- For more information about the benefits of breastfeeding, please visit <https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/making-decision-breastfeed>.



7. How can I learn more about PFAS?

- **1-800-CDC-INFO**
- **ONLINE at these websites:**
 - » **ATSDR**
<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/>
 - » **ATSDR PFAS Information for Clinicians Factsheet**
<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/resources/pfas-information-for-clinicians.html>
 - » **National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health/ Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)**
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/pfas/default.html>
 - » **Environmental Protection Agency**
<https://www.epa.gov/chemical-research/research-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas>
 - » **Consumer Product Safety Commission**
<https://www.cpsc.gov/Research-Statistics/Chemicals>
- Contact your state health department.

