

PFAS chemicals in the Water

How do PFAS chemicals get into water?

These chemicals can enter drinking water in many different ways. For example, some industrial sites let out PFAS chemicals in their wastewater, which will end up in local waterways. In Colorado, we are especially concerned about toxic firefighting foams containing these chemicals. After putting out a fire, PFAS chemicals may sink through the soil into groundwater or run off into rivers and streams. Water supply systems may collect and treat water that has PFAS chemicals in it. This treatment should remove or reduce the amount of PFAS chemicals.

Who provides my drinking water?

If you receive a water bill, then you are connected to a public drinking water system. If your water bill is included in association dues, contact the manager to determine which system provides your water. If you do not receive a bill, you could be served by a private well. Please contact your local public health agency for more information.

What should I do?

IF YOU ARE SERVED BY A PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM: Please ask your water system about their tests for PFAS chemicals.

IF YOU HAVE A PRIVATE WELL: If you live near potential PFAS sources, you should test your groundwater.

In either case, if PFAS levels are above the health advisory, you should consider other sources of water. This is especially important for bottle-fed infants and those who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding. Alternate sources of water include bottled water and water treated under the sink by a reverse osmosis system. Read the “What should I do if I have water that tests above the health advisory” section below for specific examples.

How can I remove PFAS chemicals from my drinking water?

Boiling water will not remove PFAS chemicals, but certain treatments can remove them. For household use, we recommend a reverse osmosis system installed under your sink. Reverse osmosis equipment can be purchased at local home improvement stores. You can find more information on household PFAS treatment in the next section.



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What should I do if I have water that tests above the health advisory level?



Cooking

If the levels of PFAS chemicals in your water are above 70 parts per trillion, consider using bottled water or water treated by a reverse osmosis (RO) system for foods that soak up or contain a lot of water like soup, rice, and beans. Tap water is safe for washing produce and cooking other dishes because you take in very little of this water.

Gardening

Watering your garden with water that has PFAS chemicals above the health advisory level could result in contaminated food. If you use this water for your garden, consider eating less of the produce you grow.

Some studies show leafy vegetables (such as lettuce and kale) and root crops (such as potatoes and carrots) take up more PFAS chemicals than fruits (such as tomatoes and strawberries). You could consider growing more fruits if you have water above the health advisory levels.

Infant feeding

Nursing mothers can continue to breastfeed. Use bottled or filtered water to prepare formula.



Other considerations

If using tap water with levels of PFAS chemicals above the health advisory:

- Pets: Give them bottled water or water treated by an RO system to drink.
- Laundry/cleaning: It's OK to do laundry or clean surfaces with tap water.
- Humidifiers: Use bottled water or water treated by an RO system to fill humidifiers.
- Showering: It's OK to use your tap water.
- Brushing teeth: It's OK to brush your teeth with tap water. Don't swallow it.

If you have questions about other ways to use water that has high levels of PFAS chemicals, contact ToxCall at 303-692-2606 or cdphe_toxcall@state.co.us.

