

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## PFAS in Groundwater



**PFAS**  
human-made  
"forever  
chemicals"  
including

PFOA (Perfluorooctanoic Acid)  
PFOS (Perfluorooctane Sulfonate)  
PFBS (Perfluorobutane Sulfonate)  
PFHxS (Perfluorohexane Sulfonate)  
PFNA (Perfluorononanoic Acid)  
GenX (Hexafluoropropylene oxide [HFPO] dimer acid and its ammonium salt)

### What are Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances or "PFAS"?

PFAS are a group of thousands of human-made chemicals that resist heat, oils, stains and water. They have been widely used in consumer products like nonstick cookware, stain-resistant carpets and fabrics, waterproof clothing, and food packaging. They have also been used in industrial processes and firefighting foams.

PFAS are often called "forever chemicals" because they break down very slowly and can accumulate in humans, animals, and the environment. PFAS have been found in water, air, and soil worldwide.

### How can PFAS get into my well water?

PFAS can get into drinking water if they are made, used, disposed of, or spilled near a water source. Major sources of PFAS in drinking water include fire training and response sites, industrial sites, landfills, wastewater treatment plants and biosolids.

### How can PFAS affect people's health?

A wide range of scientific studies suggests a certain level of PFAS exposure can cause adverse health effects in humans, including reproductive and developmental effects, increased risk of cancer, increased cholesterol, reduced immunity, decreased vaccine effectiveness, interference with natural hormones, and liver damage.

### Are there limits for PFAS in drinking water?

Yes, on April 10, 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established enforceable standards for six PFAS in drinking water.

Chemical	EPA Drinking Water Limit
PFOA	4 parts per trillion (ppt)
PFOS	4 ppt
PFNA	10 ppt
PFHxS	10 ppt
HFPO-DA (GenX)	10 ppt
Mixture of two or more: PFNA, PFHxS, GenX, and PFBS	Hazard index of 1

### Do I need to test my water for PFAS?

If your water comes from a public water supply, such as a city or water company, it is tested regularly to ensure that it meets drinking water standards. Contact the agency that provides your water bill for more information on water quality, including PFAS.

If your water comes from a domestic well, you are responsible for ensuring it is safe to drink. Because PFAS are colorless and odorless, the only way to tell if you have PFAS in your water is to have it tested. You can find laboratories in our area that are certified to test for PFAS at [www.waterboards.ca.gov/pfas/docs/pfas-laboratories.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/pfas/docs/pfas-laboratories.pdf).

### What can I do if there are PFAS in my well water?

Although domestic wells are not subject to drinking water regulations, the EPA standards provide context to help interpret your water test results.

If you are concerned about PFAS in your water, you may want to consider a treatment system or alternate water source for drinking, cooking, and mixing baby formula. Boiling the water will not remove PFAS. Keep in mind that bottled water may also contain PFAS, and currently, there are no federal regulations for PFAS in bottled water.

Various treatment technologies can reduce PFAS in drinking water including activated carbon, reverse osmosis, and ion exchange resin. These technologies may be used in filters installed on faucets, whole house systems, or pitcher-type filters. If you work with a local water treatment company, we recommend you get confirmation the system you are considering will work in your situation.

For any system you choose to reduce PFAS:

- Check the product packaging or specifications for NSF/ANSI 53 or NSF/ANSI 58 certification to reduce PFAS.
- Confirm this certification through a reputable, independent testing agency like NSF (see link below).
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for maintenance and filter replacement. Proper maintenance is essential to ensure the system reduces PFAS as designed.

More information on PFAS treatment options can be found at:

- [nsf.org/news/pfoa-pfos-reduction-claims-requirements-added-to-nsf-standards](https://www.nsf.org/news/pfoa-pfos-reduction-claims-requirements-added-to-nsf-standards)
- [info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/](https://info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/)
- [epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-04/water-filter-fact-sheet.pdf](https://epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-04/water-filter-fact-sheet.pdf)
- [epa.gov/sciencematters/reducing-pfas-drinking-water-treatment-technologies](https://epa.gov/sciencematters/reducing-pfas-drinking-water-treatment-technologies)

## How can I guard against PFAS in my well water?

Various consumer products used as fire retardants or to resist stains, oils, grease, or water may contain PFAS. To reduce the risk of PFAS contamination in your well:

1. Avoid using cleaning agents, automotive fluids, fire retardants and water-proofing agents near your well.
2. Limit the use of products containing PFAS within your home if you have a septic system.
3. Ensure proper well location, construction, and maintenance:
  - Wells should be uphill of and at least 100 feet away from septic/sewer systems, industrial sites, and other potential contamination sources.
  - The well casing should extend above the ground and surface runoff should be directed away from the wellhead.

- The concrete slab on the wellhead should be intact.
- For more information, see our Guide for the Private Well Owner at [valleywater.org/your-water/groundwater/groundwater-quality](https://valleywater.org/your-water/groundwater/groundwater-quality).



## What is Valley Water doing about PFAS?

Valley Water is responsible for providing safe, clean water and protecting groundwater. We have been proactive in evaluating the threat posed by PFAS in water supplies by:

- Conducting voluntary and required testing for PFAS in water supplies.
- Coordinating with water retailers and regulatory agencies to understand PFAS impacts and protect local water supplies.
- Taking legal action against PFAS manufacturers.
- Providing timely and transparent communication to the public.



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## CONTACT US

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