

FACT SHEET

PFAS (Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances)



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 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, waterproofing 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. PFOA and PFOS are two common PFAS chemicals.



What are the health effects of PFAS?

A wide range of scientific studies suggest 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.



How are people exposed to PFAS?

Most people have been exposed to PFAS through consumer products, but drinking water can be another exposure source. The major sources of PFAS in water supplies are fire training and response sites where fire-suppressing foam was applied, industrial sites, landfills, and wastewater treatment plants/biosolids. Because of their persistence in the environment, PFAS can accumulate in water supplies.



Are there limits for PFAS in drinking water?

Yes, on April 10, 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 4 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and PFOS and

10 ppt for PFNA, PFHxS, and GenX. The rule also regulates combined amounts of four other types of PFAS chemicals (PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and GenX).

Public water systems will need to monitor their water supply for these chemicals within three years and include the results in their Annual Water Quality Reports to customers. Systems that detect PFAS above the drinking water limits will have up to five years to implement solutions, such as treatment or other actions, to ensure water delivered to customers does not exceed these limits. Water systems must also notify the public if levels of regulated PFAS exceed these new standards.

For more information, please visit epa.gov/sdwa/and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas.



Has local drinking water been tested for PFAS?

Yes. Valley Water's treated water supplies meet the drinking water regulations as none of the six PFAS have been detected. This means that all the water supplied by Valley Water's three treatment plants to water retailers continues to meet all federal and state regulatory requirements, including the PFAS drinking water limits, and is safe to drink.

PFOA and PFOS have been detected at and just above the MCL in two of three wells in Valley Water's Campbell Well Field. However, water from these emergency supply wells has never been served to water retailers or the public. Some water retailer wells are expected to be impacted by the EPA rule, which could require treatment or other actions.

The State Board and EPA continue to order PFAS testing of water supply wells throughout the state. Related results from wells in Santa Clara County are helping us better understand the presence of PFAS in local groundwater.



What if I have a private well?

Unlike public water systems, water from domestic wells is not subject to federal or state water quality regulations. To protect your health, you may want to test your drinking water for PFAS and other potential contaminants. Valley Water recommends using an accredited laboratory to test your drinking water.



How can PFAS in drinking water be treated?

Some public water systems may need to treat their source water to ensure water delivered to customers meets drinking

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water limits. Various treatment technologies can reduce PFAS, including activated carbon, reverse osmosis, and ion exchange resin.

If you are concerned with PFAS in your water, please contact your water provider for information on whether PFAS are present in the water delivered to your area. If you are interested in a home treatment system, PFAS can be reduced by certain filters installed on faucets, whole-house systems, or pitcher-type filters. If considering a home treatment system 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/
- epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-04/water-filter-fact-sheet.pdf
- epa.gov/sciencematters/reducing-pfas-drinking-water-treatment-technologies



Are PFAS found in bottled water?

Bottled water producers are not subject to EPA drinking water regulations. The Food and Drug Administration, which regulates bottled water, evaluates EPA drinking water standards and adopts bottled water standards as appropriate. There are currently no federal regulations for PFAS in bottled water. We recommend consumers contact bottled water producers directly for information about their product's water quality.



Are PFAS found in purified recycled water?

Valley Water is exploring the use of purified recycled water as a drought-resilient water supply for groundwater recharge or other potable reuse. While PFAS may be present in wastewater, any purified recycled water used by Valley Water would be treated with multiple proven technologies, including reverse osmosis, which effectively removes PFAS. Valley Water is carefully testing these technologies at our Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center to ensure purified recycled water meets or exceeds drinking water standards and protects human health and the environment.



What is Valley Water doing about PFAS?

We take our responsibility to provide safe, clean water and to protect groundwater very seriously. Valley Water has been proactively evaluating the threat posed by PFAS through voluntary sampling and coordination with other agencies. Our water quality laboratory is accredited to test for PFAS in drinking water.

Valley Water and our water retailers use proven technologies and best practices to ensure drinking water delivered to businesses and residents meets or exceeds all drinking water standards. Valley Water continues to collaborate with regulatory agencies and water retailers to assess impacts to local supplies and to evaluate potential sources and treatment technologies. Valley Water will also continue to provide timely, transparent communication to customers and the public.

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CONTACT US

To find out more about PFAS or to submit questions or comments, please contact Jason Gurdak at 408-630-2971 or jgurdak@valleywater.org.

Access Valley Water customer request system at access.valleywater.org.



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