

PFAS IN OUR WATER

PFAS may harm a child's development, damage your liver, and increase your risk of cancer.¹



Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of chemicals resistant to heat, water, and oil. For decades, PFAS have been used for industrial applications and consumer products such as carpeting, waterproof clothing, upholstery, food packaging, firefighting foam, and various paper products.

Often referred to as “forever chemicals,” PFAS do not break-down in the environment. Municipalities release the compounds in treated wastewater and sewage sludge that is applied to farm fields as fertilizer.

There is mounting evidence linking PFAS to a range of negative health effects including:

- Cancer
- Liver damage
- Decreased fertility
- Increased risk of asthma
- Increased risk of thyroid disease
- Growth, learning, and behavior impairment
- Interference with the body's natural hormones
- Increased cholesterol levels²

Truth is, we don't know how widespread the exposure to these dangerous chemicals might be. There are no state or federal guidelines establishing what levels of these chemicals are acceptable in our drinking water.

We don't know for how long or how many of us have been drinking PFAS contaminated water, or understanding the consequences for our health.



Janell's story

Tyco Fire Products in Peshtigo knew its toxic products were contaminating groundwater for four years before notifying residents.

Local mom Janell Goldsmith, and her husband Duane, who live near the plant, twice tested their well water and found PFAS contamination above the federal health advisory threshold.

Duane has been diagnosed with gastrointestinal cancer while Janell suffered pregnancy-induced high blood pressure. The couple's two children also have had developmental delays.³



The tip of the iceberg

Of the more than 11,000 public drinking water systems in Wisconsin, only about 90 have been tested for PFAS.⁴



An assault on our most vulnerable

The major types of human exposure sources for PFAS include contaminated drinking water and ingesting food contaminated with PFAS.

PFAS research also shows that the developing fetus can be exposed to PFAS when umbilical cord blood from their mothers crosses the placenta during pregnancy.

Newborns can be exposed to PFAS through breast milk.

Older children may be exposed to PFAS through food and water, similar to adults.

In addition, toddlers and young children have a higher risk of exposure to PFAS from stain-resistant carpeting and similar products, largely due to time spent lying and crawling on floors in their early years.⁵

Firefighting foam, pictured above, is one of many sources of PFAS. Because of that, PFAS are prevalent in communities where there are military bases, firefighting training centers, and manufacturers of the foam. However, we've only begun to scratch the surface on where these chemicals are most likely to be contaminating our drinking water.

DNR secretary designee Preston Cole recently requested that 125 water systems be tested for PFAS. Those communities include:

- Antigo
- Madison
- Sparta
- Brillion
- Marinette
- Stevens Point
- Brookfield
- Milwaukee
- Sturgeon Bay
- Burlington
- Monroe
- Tomahawk
- Chippewa Falls
- Muscoda
- Tomah
- Clintonville
- Oconto
- Westfield
- Coleman
- Peshtigo
- Whiting
- Elroy
- Plover
- Wild Rose
- Fennimore
- Reedsburg
- Wittenberg
- Hortonville
- Richland Center

There is legislation circulating now that would take a comprehensive approach to preventing and remediating PFAS pollution. SB 302/AB 321, or the CLEAR Act, would require the DNR to establish standards that will protect human health in our drinking water, surface water, groundwater, soil, and air. The legislation will also require the clean up of PFAS chemicals when human health is at risk.

Ask your legislators to support the CLEAR Act, SB 302/AB 321, today!

SOURCES: 1. https://www.michigan.gov/som/0,4669,7-192-45414_45929_83470_83473-452154--,00.html; 2. https://www.michigan.gov/som/0,4669,7-192-45414_45929_83470_83473-452154--,00.html; 3. <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/wisconsin/2019/02/04/tyco-waited-4-years-disclose-toxins-wisconsin-drinking-wells/2727670002/>; 4. https://www.michigan.gov/som/0,4669,7-192-45414_45929_83470_83473-452154--,00.html; 5. <https://cswab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Wisconsin-PFAS-Tip-of-the-Iceberg-Flyer-1.pdf>