

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE BEEN EXPOSED?**

### **What can people do to reduce their risk of exposure to PFC/PFAS?**

PFC/PFAS are found in the blood of people and animals all over the world and are present at low levels in a variety of food products and in the environment (air, water, soil, etc.). Therefore, completely preventing exposure to PFC/PFAS is unlikely, and no effective recommendations can be made for entirely reducing individual exposures in the general population. However, if you live near known sources of PFC/PFAS contamination, you can take steps to reduce your risk of exposure to PFC/PFAS.

For example, numerous states have issued advisories cautioning consumers to either stop or limit eating fish from waters contaminated with PFOS or other PFC/PFAS. Check with your state public health and environmental quality departments for any advisories in place in your area and to learn the types and local sources of fish that are safe to eat.

If your water contains PFOA and PFOS, you can reduce exposure by using an alternative or treated water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth, and any activity that might result in ingestion of water. Routine showering or bathing in this water should not be a problem. Studies have shown very limited absorption of PFC/PFAS through the skin. Many PFC/PFAS including PFOS and PFOA are essentially non-volatile, such that inhalation while bathing or showering is not likely to be a major pathway.

A variety of consumer products, including non-stick coatings on cookware and coatings on clothing, carpets, and paper packaging, have contained different types of PFC/PFAS in the past. While recent efforts to remove long-chain PFC/PFAS from many of these products have reduced the likelihood of exposure to long-chain PFAS, exposure to short-chain PFC/PFAS may still be possible through modern consumer products. However, research has suggested that exposure from consumer products is usually low, especially when compared to the impact of exposure in contaminated drinking water or contaminated food such as fish.

You can contact CDC/ATSDR for updated information on this topic at 1-800-CDC-INFO. If you have questions or concerns about the products you use in your home, contact the Consumer Product Safety Commission at (800) 638-2772.

### **Is it safe to take a shower or bath?**

Routine showering or bathing will not likely cause a significant exposure. Studies have shown very limited absorption of PFC/PFAS through the skin. Many PFC/PFAS including PFOS and PFOA are essentially non-volatile, such that inhalation while bathing or showering is not likely to be a major pathway.

### **Are taking showers safer than taking a bath?**

No. Neither routine showering or bathing are a significant source of exposure. Studies have shown very limited absorption of PFC/PFAS through the skin. Many PFC/PFAS including PFOS and PFOA are essentially non-volatile, such that inhalation while bathing or showering is not likely to be a major pathway.

### **Should I filter my tap water before drinking?**

ATSDR does not currently recommend any specific point-of-use filters for drinking water because the effectiveness and proper use of these devices has not been established. If your water contains PFOA and PFOS at level that exceed the health advisory levels of 0.07 ppb (combined), you can reduce exposure by

using an alternative or treated water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth, and any activity that might result in ingestion of water.

### **Should I drink bottled water?**

If your water contains PFOA and PFOS, you may reduce exposure by using an alternative or treated water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth, and any activity that might result in ingestion of water. It is safe to shower and bath in PFC/PFAS- contaminated water. However, bottled water is not tested for the presence of PFC/PFAS, so we don't know if PFC/PFAS may be present in these sources as well.

### **Can I do laundry and wash dishes with tap water?**

Yes. Doing laundry or washing dishes is not likely to pose a significant exposure to PFC/PFAS.

### **How do I eliminate PFC/PFAS from my body if I have been exposed?**

There are no medical interventions that will remove PFC/PFAS from the body. The best intervention is to stop the source of exposure.

### **Is there treatment for people who have been exposed to PFC/PFAS?**

ATSDR does not recommend any specific treatments for people who have been exposed to PFC/PFAS. If PFC/PFAS are detected in your water, or if you or family members have signs or symptoms that you think are caused by PFC/PFAS exposure, discuss your concerns with your family's health care provider.

### **If I am pregnant, is it safe to drink tap water?**

If the EPA's Long Term Health Advisory levels are exceeded, pregnant women may wish to seek an alternative drinking water source until levels of PFOA and PFOS in the drinking water are reduced. You can reduce exposure by using an alternative or treated water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth, and any activity that might result in ingestion of water.

### **If I am pregnant, should I filter my tap water before drinking?**

ATSDR does not currently recommend any specific point-of-use filters for drinking water because the effectiveness and proper use of these devices has not been established. If your water contains PFOA and PFOS, you can reduce exposure by using an alternative or treated water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth, and any activity that might result in ingestion of water.

### **If I am pregnant should I only drink bottled water?**

If the EPA's Long Term Health Advisory levels are exceeded, pregnant women may wish to seek an alternative drinking water source until levels of PFOA and PFOS in the drinking water are reduced. You can reduce exposure by using an alternative or treated water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth, and any activity that might result in ingestion of water. Bottled water is not tested for the presence of PFC/PFAS.

### **Is it safe to breastfeed?**

Breastfeeding is linked with numerous health benefits for both infants and mothers. At this time, it is recommended that nursing mothers continue to breastfeed. The science on the health effects of PFC/PFAS for mothers and babies is evolving. However, given the scientific understanding at this time, the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any known risk. To better weigh the risks and benefits of breastfeeding, please talk to your child's pediatrician.

Extensive research has documented the broad and compelling advantages of breastfeeding for infants, mothers, families, and society. Some of the many benefits include immunologic advantages, lower obesity rates, and greater cognitive development for the infant as well as a variety of health advantages for the lactating mother.

Even though a number of environmental pollutants readily pass to the infant through human milk, the advantages of breastfeeding continue to outweigh the potential risks in nearly every circumstance.

### **I am using powdered formula to feed my baby, is it safe to use tap water to mix the formula or should I use bottled water?**

If the EPA's Long Term Health Advisory levels are exceeded, caregivers preparing bottles for infants may wish to seek an alternative water source, or use formula that does not require adding water until levels of PFOA and PFOS in the drinking water are reduced. However, at this time, we don't know how much risk-reduction, if any, will occur through the use of alternate water sources. You can reduce exposure by using an alternative or treated water source for drinking, food preparation, cooking, brushing teeth, and any activity that might result in ingestion of water. Bottled water is not tested for the presence of PFC/PFAS, so we don't know if switching to bottled water will provide any health benefit.

### **References on What To Do If You Have Been Exposed?**

- [http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/health\\_effects\\_pfcs.html](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/health_effects_pfcs.html)
- <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos>