PFAS Testing in Private Wells:

Understanding Your Results



Common questions about PFAS and drinking water

What are PFAS chemicals?
PFAS are a large group of human-made chemicals. Some PFAS can stay in your body or in the environment for a very long time. They are sometimes called "forever" chemicals. PFAS have been applied to many products, like clothes, cosmetics, furniture, carpet, cooking items, and food packaging to make the items repel water, stains, grease, and fire. "PFAS" is short for "per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances".

How could exposure to PFAS affect my health?
The degree of risk depends on many factors, including your health and how much and how long you were exposed to the chemicals. Having higher levels of PFAS in your blood does not mean you will develop a health problem. Health effects linked to PFAS include:

- Decreased response to some vaccines
- Increased cholesterol levels
- Decreased infant and fetal growth
- Increased risk of kidney and testicular cancers
- Hypertension (high blood pressure) and pre-eclampsia during pregnancy

How could I be exposed to PFAS?
Most of us have some level of PFAS in our blood. We are exposed to PFAS through contaminated food and water, household products, or working or living in or near facilities where PFAS are made or used.

How do I understand test results for PFAS in well water?
Your report will tell you which PFAS were detected in your private well. To evaluate PFAS in private drinking water, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) follows the Interim Drinking Water Standard of 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L) established by the Maine State Legislature for six PFAS: PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, PFHpA, PFHxS, and PFDA.

If your results are above 20 ng/L, it is recommended you take steps to reduce the amount of the contaminated water you drink. It does not necessarily mean you will experience health problems.

The Maine DEP has a helpful tip sheet for understanding your water test results at Maine.gov. Visit using this QR code.

What should I do if I have too much PFAS in my water?



1. **Use bottled water** for drinking water and other consumption. In most cases, you can continue to use your water for cooking, bathing, and brushing teeth. If you grow vegetables or raise chickens for eggs, call the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 866-292-3474 to talk about using your water.



2. **Install filters on your water supply.** Maine DEP can work with you to install filters. Filtration systems and commercial filters with the code NSF/ANSI 53 or NSF/ANSI 58 for reverse osmosis systems can reduce concentrations of PFOA, PFOS and other PFAS below 20 ng/L (per filter certification standards as of October 2024).



3. **Talk with your doctor** to understand your risk of exposure and whether blood testing is appropriate. A PFAS blood test can tell you the amount of certain PFAS present in your blood. It cannot detect exposure from many years ago (e.g., more than 10 years), predict health problems, or identify the source of PFAS. The Maine Department of Agriculture Conservation and Forestry is working to provide free access to blood testing for eligible individuals. More resources will be available fall 2025.

FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PFAS

CALL: **A Maine CDC toxicologist at at 866-292-3474 (toll-free in Maine), 207-287-4311, or Maine Relay, 711.**

EMAIL: **Questions to pfas.mecdc@maine.gov and attach your lab results.**

VISIT: **Find more Maine DEP PFAS resources using the QR code:**