

Testing Your Blood for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

PFAS blood testing can inform you about the amount of PFAS in your blood. PFAS can be found in the blood of most people around the world. Some PFAS can build up and stay in the human body for many years but can also decline if the exposure stops. The federal government monitors PFAS blood levels in people across the country and shows levels have steadily decreased over the past 25 years.

The health impacts we are most concerned about for people exposed to PFAS include:

- effects on the immune system such as decreased vaccination response.
- changes in liver function such as higher cholesterol and elevated liver enzymes.
- lower birth weight.
- lifetime exposure to PFOA has also been associated with kidney cancer.

It is possible to get your blood tested for PFAS, but the results have some important limitations. Blood testing for PFAS is costly, gives limited information about current PFAS exposures, and cannot be used to diagnose illness or disease. This information sheet provides an overview of MDH's current understanding of the benefits and limitations of PFAS blood testing.

What blood testing can tell you

- **PFAS levels in your blood.** Blood testing shows the amount of PFAS in your blood at the time of your blood test. It does not show how your levels have changed over time, how you were exposed to PFAS, or what your current exposure is.
- **How your PFAS blood levels differ from others.** PFAS levels in the US population have decreased over the past 25 years. See the CDC's page on [PFAS in the U.S. Population](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/us-population.html) (<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/us-population.html>).
- **The concentrations of a small number of PFAS in blood.** There are thousands of different types of PFAS. Most labs test for a small number of PFAS chemicals.

Talk to your healthcare provider to discuss if blood testing is right for you. Testing may be informative if you have had very high exposures to PFAS that are not typical of the general population, such as occupational settings.

What blood testing can't tell you

- **PFAS blood testing cannot be used to diagnose or predict illness or disease.** Many health issues associated with PFAS, such as increased cholesterol and decreased thyroid hormone levels, are common in the population as a whole. These health issues can be caused by many factors, and there is no way to know or predict if PFAS exposure has or will cause your health problem.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider to discuss if blood testing is right for you.** If you have specific health concerns, please consult your doctor to discuss whether you need to be monitored more frequently for health effects associated with PFAS.

What you can do to reduce your exposure to PFAS

The best way to reduce PFAS levels in your blood is to reduce your exposure to PFAS. For most people, consumer products that are grease, oil, stain and/or water resistant are a much greater source of PFAS exposure than drinking water. Additional information on reducing your exposure to PFAS is available online:

[Reducing Exposures: Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/docs/pfas/pfasreducingexp.pdf)

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Eliminating all exposure to PFAS is unlikely; however, you can take the following steps to reduce your exposure to PFAS.

- **Limit use of consumer products that contain PFAS.** PFAS is used in many consumer products. Here is a selection of items that might contain PFAS: Food packaging, including grease-resistant paper, fast food containers/wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, pizza boxes, and candy wrappers; Nonstick cookware; Stain-resistant coatings used on carpets, upholstery, and other fabrics; Some personal care products (shampoo, dental floss) and cosmetics (nail polish, eye makeup, lip gloss).
- **Follow fish consumption guidance to choose fish low in PFAS**—Some PFAS, predominantly PFOS, may be present in the fish people catch and eat. Fish Consumption Guidance for fish caught in areas contaminated with PFAS is available on the MDH webpage: [Fish Consumption Guidance](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/fish/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/fish/index.html>).
- **Remove household dust.** Household dust can be a significant source of PFAS exposure, especially for infants and young children. Keeping floors and other surfaces free of dust can limit this exposure.
- **Prepare infant formula with filtered water or bottled water if your water source has high levels of PFAS.** People who are pregnant, fetuses, and children are sensitive to potential health impacts from PFAS in their bodies and should reduce their exposure to PFAS.

Weblinks

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). (July 2024). [MDH Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\) webpage](https://www.health.state.mn.us/pfas) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/pfas>).

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). (January 2024). [PFAS in the U.S. Population webpage](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/us-population.html) <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/us-population.html>.

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To obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-4897.