

What South Carolinians should know about PFAS

What are PFAS? PFAS is an acronym for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a class of chemicals that have been manufactured in the U.S. since the 1950s. PFAS were considered useful compounds because of their effectiveness at repelling grease and water and the ability to extinguish large fuel fires.

Where are PFAS found? PFAS are used to manufacture some nonstick cookware, stain and water-resistant carpets, fabrics, and clothing, cosmetics, dental floss, paper and food packaging materials, fire-fighting foams and more. PFAS are often called 'forever chemicals' because they last a long time in the environment. They can be found in surface water, groundwater, soils and air.

How can PFAS affect me? Scientific research over the past five years indicates that there *may* be human health and ecological effects due to the widespread use of PFAS in industry. On March 14, 2023, the EPA issued their proposed Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for PFOA and PFOS in Drinking Water and a Hazard Index calculation for the

mixture of four other commonly detected PFAS. The six PFAS compounds are specified in the proposed MCL because they are the most studied of the PFAS compounds. These proposed MCLs for PFAS represent chronic, or long-term health hazards and assume that a person drinks 2.5 liters of impacted water every day for 70 years. The proposed MCL is out for public comment and will not be finalized until the end of the year and concentration requirements may change.

Drinking water MCLs are set at levels that a sensitive population can be exposed to without experiencing any negative health effects.

What can I do about it? We have all heard the phrase, "Knowledge is power." See the link below to online resources that can help you make the best decisions for you and your family. If PFAS has been detected in your drinking water, a point-of-use filter certified to remove PFAS compounds can be used. Follow manufacturer's instructions regarding frequency of replacement.

NOTE: There is still a lot of uncertainty around the issue of PFAS and public health. Research and information are rapidly evolving so check the [DHEC PFAS webpage](https://dhec.sc.gov/PFAS) frequently for updates.

