

What are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of chemicals used since the 1940s in common household and commercial products. PFAS have unique chemical properties and are often used to keep food from sticking to cookware. They also make clothes, carpets, and furniture resistant to water and stains.

Many recent news articles and movies focus on PFAS, typically when they are found in local drinking water. Because we test for PFAS in water, however, you may hear more about PFAS in water than from other sources. Water gets this media attention because it is regularly tested for potentially harmful chemicals by law, unlike many of the other things we eat, drink, and breathe. Understanding how PFAS can enter our environment, our homes, and our bodies can help us manage our exposure.

How Does PFAS Enter the Environment?

PFAS are slow to break down in the environment and can move far from their original use areas. The manufacturing and use of products with PFAS puts PFAS into the environment, where, over time, they may end up in drinking water supplies.

- PFAS can enter the environment as we throw away products that have PFAS, and through our own bodily waste.
- PFAS can also enter the environment when companies make products with PFAS, releasing them directly into our water and air.
- Natural breakdown of PFAS is negligible or sometimes non-existent, allowing PFAS to build up and remain in the environment. This leads to increasing levels of PFAS in the natural resources we use from the environment, like water, food, and soil.

How are Humans Exposed?

Because PFAS are used in so many everyday products, most people in the United States and other industrialized countries now have PFAS in their blood. Exposure to PFAS depends on many things, including the amount of PFAS in your local environment, the amount of PFAS in food, water, or other products, and how much a person eats, drinks, or uses those products.

- We swallow, inhale, or rub PFAS into our skin by using certain products, eating or drinking impacted food and water, and breathing in the dust in our homes.
- As in the environment, PFAS can build up in the human body over time and have been associated with some negative health effects.

How Does PFAS Affect Me?

Scientists are still studying the health effects of elevated PFAS blood levels, which may include increased risk of certain types of cancer, high cholesterol, and decreased vaccine response in children.

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) found that PFOA and PFOS blood levels have dropped more than 60% and 80% respectively between 1999 and 2014, since manufacturers stopped using them in 2000. PFOA and PFOS are two common PFAS that are the focus of recent state and federal regulatory deliberations. Thousands of different PFAS chemical compounds are still in use. The effects of newer PFAS are still not known, but the studies suggest that phasing out harmful chemicals can make a big difference.

What is Peoples Water Service Doing to Manage PFAS?

Drinking water being provided by Peoples Water Service Company of Florida, Inc. (Peoples) currently meets all relevant Florida and federal regulations relating to drinking water.

Your health and the health of your household are our first priority. That's why we look for potentially concerning contaminants like PFAS long before they are regulated. Water quality is regulated to protect public health and drinking water quality is public information. Because of this, water often provides our first clues about trends we need to pay attention to.

Knowing that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was studying PFAS, Peoples engaged a consulting engineering firm to prepare a study to address PFAS concentrations within the water system. This study will develop a treatment concept and cost opinion to comply with future regulations.

On March 14, 2023, EPA announced the proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) for six PFAS chemicals including PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, HFPO-DA, PFHxS and PFBS, measured in parts per trillion (PPT).

The proposed PFAS NPDWR does not require any actions until it is finalized and a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) is issued. Public water suppliers would then have three (3) years to meet the new standards.

Peoples has detected levels of PFAS above the proposed MCL and is taking the appropriate steps to comply with the proposed regulation. One step may be to install the proper filtration system(s) to remove the PFAS.

However, in addition to the costs of installing filtration, Peoples is required to continuously sample, analyze, and report detections of PFAS in its drinking water supplies to regulatory agencies. These steps are costly and burdensome.

In response to the presence of PFAS in its drinking water supplies and the costs associated with filtration and testing, Peoples have filed a lawsuit against the manufacturers of PFAS to ensure that any costs associated with removing PFAS from its water supplies are borne by 3M, DuPont, and the other companies that sold and profited from their PFAS containing products.

Through its lawsuit, People's claims that, as the manufacturers and sellers of PFAS containing products, 3M, DuPont, and other defendants knew that these products would pollute drinking water supplies throughout the country yet failed to take reasonable and available steps to avoid the use of PFAS in products and failed to provide warnings that using these products would result in the contamination of drinking water supplies. As a result, Peoples seeks to hold the defendants liable for the damages to their drinking water supply under the legal doctrines of strict products liability, nuisance, trespass, and negligence.

Peoples filed its lawsuit on November 17, 2022. in the federal District Court of Charleston, South Carolina, which is where PFAS related suits from around the country are being litigated, requesting a trial by jury. Peoples is represented by a consortium of firms with national expertise in PFAS litigation, including Levin, Papantonio, Rafferty, Proctor, Buchanan, O'Brien, Barr, Mougey, P.A.; Taft, Stettinius & Hollister, LLP; Douglas & London, P.C.; Kennedy & Madonna, LLP; and SL Environmental Law Group; PC.

Look to official sources of information to stay current on the latest research developments. Reliable sources include:

- [The Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- [Drinking Water \(navy.mil\)](#)