

**To:** Vermont Healthcare Providers and Healthcare Facilities  
**Date:** June 2, 2026  
**From:** Andrea Kirk, State Toxicologist

## **Clinical Guidance for Patients Exposed to PFAS in Drinking Water**

### **Summary**

Recently Vermont's regulatory level for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water was lowered, and there are additional public water systems and private wells that now exceed the new standard. Because drinking water is a primary source of PFAS exposure, drinking water exposure should be documented in a patient's medical record and used to inform their ongoing care. The Vermont Department of Health recommends that anyone who has PFAS detected in their drinking water discuss their health history and concerns with their healthcare provider.

### **Health Outcomes Related to PFAS Exposure**

PFAS are harmful to human health, leading to a wide range of adverse health outcomes including:

- Increases in cholesterol levels
- Decreases in birth weight
- Lower antibody response to vaccines
- Kidney and testicular cancer
- Pregnancy-induced hypertension
- Preeclampsia
- Changes in liver enzymes

### **Testing, Screenings and Treatments**

Currently, there are no official guidelines for management of PFAS blood levels and no approved medical treatments to reduce PFAS levels in the body. The most effective way to lower serum PFAS concentrations is to reduce or eliminate exposure.

Some patients may request a PFAS blood test, which can be ordered through a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA)-certified commercial laboratory. Before ordering a test, consider the [benefits and limitations of PFAS blood testing](#). Please note a blood test is

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not required to confirm exposure to PFAS. If a patient has detected PFAS in water they consume, then they will have PFAS in their blood.

Because patients with PFAS-contaminated drinking water have a known exposure to PFAS, consider testing for or assessing the patient's most recent metabolic, liver, renal, and thyroid function tests. Understanding a patient's exposure history, along with other health risk factors, can help determine whether additional or more frequent screening may be appropriate. Decisions about screening for specific health outcomes should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account factors such as genetics, occupational history and lifestyle.

### **Requested Actions**

- Review ASTDR's [PFAS Information for Clinicians](#), which includes considerations for when it may be appropriate to order a PFAS blood test.
- If a patient has any PFAS chemical detected in their water, document the exposure in their medical record.
- Consider testing for or assessing the patient's most recent metabolic, liver, renal, and thyroid function tests.

### **Background**

PFAS – sometimes called “forever chemicals” – are a large group of manufactured chemicals that are widely used in consumer, commercial, and industrial products for their ability to resist heat and repel oil, stains, grease and water. The most common PFAS exposures are from drinking water, food and food packaging, as well as from occupational exposures.

PFAS are persistent in the environment and build up in the human body over time with continued exposure. Almost every person living in the United States has PFAS in their blood. In general, the lower a person's exposure to PFAS, the lower their risk of having adverse health outcomes.

In January 2026, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources [updated regulatory levels for PFAS](#) in public water systems. While this is a regulatory level required for public water systems to meet, the Health Department generally recommends that PFAS levels in drinking water be as low as possible.

### **Additional Resources**

- [Guidance on PFAS Exposure, Testing, and Clinical Follow-Up](#) (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine)

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- [Screening for PFAS Levels in Your Blood](#) (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry)
  - This is a PFAS Blood Level Estimation Tool that estimates the amount of PFAS in a person's blood based on detected PFAS levels in drinking water. Note: when entering the PFAS concentrations of tap water, it is important to select parts per trillion (ppt), or it will result in falsely high estimated levels of PFAS in blood.
- [Does my patient need testing for PFAS 'forever chemicals'?](#) (Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine)
  - This article describes how to respond to PFAS test results as well as what the testing limitations are.
- [PFAS in Drinking Water](#) (Vermont Department of Health)

If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Kirk at: [andrea.kirk@vermont.gov](mailto:andrea.kirk@vermont.gov)

To have your information updated please email the Vermont HAN Coordinator at: [vthan@vermont.gov](mailto:vthan@vermont.gov).

### **HAN Message Type Definitions**

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

**Info Service Message:** Provides general correspondence from the Vermont Department of Health, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.

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