

PFAS Progress Newsletter — August 2020



Welcome to the second edition of *PFAS Progress*! You may have noticed that we have updated our website to make it easier to use. We asked community members what information about PFAS they wanted and how they wanted to find it on our website. Please [take a look](#) and let us know what you think and if you have more suggestions about making it even more user friendly.

At CDC/ATSDR, we are maintaining our efforts to learn more about PFAS as the COVID-19 pandemic still impacts much of America. We continue to promote CDC guidelines on social distancing and wearing masks to slow the spread of the disease. Further, we are putting safety measures in place for a time when we are ready to restart health studies. In this edition, please read about one PFAS exposure assessment and the safety measures we put in place for the community so that we can continue this important work.

We hope you enjoy this edition!

Activities Updates

Exposure Assessments (EAs)

In 2019 and 2020, CDC/ATSDR started [exposure assessments](#) (EAs) in [eight communities](#) near current or former military bases known to have had per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in their drinking water. The primary goal of these EAs is to provide information to communities about levels of PFAS in their bodies. Individuals who participate in the EAs provide blood and urine samples. CDC/ATSDR also administers questionnaires, as well as collects dust and tap water samples from some participants. Community-level test results are now available for the following four EA sites:

- [Hampden County \(MA\), near Barnes Air National Guard Base](#)
- [Berkeley County \(WV\), near Shepherd Field Air National Guard Base](#)
- [New Castle County \(DE\), near New Castle Air National Guard Base](#)
- [Spokane County \(WA\), near Fairchild Air Force Base](#)

The biological and environmental test results show:


- Levels of two PFAS (PFHxS, PFOS) in blood samples were detected above national averages across all four communities. PFOA was detected above the national average in three of the communities.
- Two PFAS (PFBA and PFHxS) were detected at low concentrations in some urine samples.
- PFAS levels for all tap water samples were below all federal and applicable state guidelines for PFAS in drinking water.

CDC/ATSDR is evaluating additional data collected from the PFAS EAs, including the dust test results and exposure questionnaires, to better understand exposure in the communities. We will share the findings in site-specific reports and will host information sessions to talk with all community members.

CDC/ATSDR paused the EAs to protect staff and community members from the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. EA activities have since restarted in Alaska and Colorado. Please [read](#) about CDC guidelines to prevent COVID-19.

PFAS Exposure Assessment Technical Tools (PEATT)

In June, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) sponsored a webinar presenting how the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) expanded its use of CDC/ATSDR's PEATT. The Pennsylvania Department of Health first used the PEATT in 2018. The PEATT is a model protocol for health agencies interested in measuring human PFAS exposures through drinking water sources. The expanded work includes further sampling of the original study population.

From May through September 2018, PADOH held weekly clinics at the Bucks County Health Department and the Montgomery County Health Department to draw blood samples from randomly selected study participants. Then in 2019, PADOH performed additional testing on urine in those same households, and on PFAS levels in dust and tap water in some selected households. These tests were designed to learn if communities were exposed to PFAS through other sources in addition to drinking water. Please [view the webinar](#)  to learn more about the findings and future efforts to learn more about PFAS.

Pease Study

Learning about the health effects of PFAS through the Pease Study in Portsmouth, NH, is extremely important to CDC/ATSDR, as is the safety of all staff and community members who participate in this work during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, the Pease Study was paused to follow CDC social distancing guidelines to protect the public and slow the spread of the disease.

During the pause, we are preparing for a time when we can safely restart the study. Part of our preparation includes putting in place strong safety measures to screen community members and staff by taking temperatures and asking health questions about COVID-19 symptoms before allowing anyone to enter the study office. Other safety measures include properly using personal protective equipment such as gloves, gowns, and masks, as well as providing hand washing stations, hand sanitizers, and wipes.

Please check our [website](#) periodically for the announcement of the restart of the Pease Study.

Multi-site Health Study

CDC/ATSDR received approval from the Office of Management and Budget for the Multi-site Health Study protocol. The goal of the study is to learn more about the relationship between PFAS exposure and health outcomes among differing populations. It will also compare different levels of PFAS exposure from different sites and health outcomes. The project will provide better scientific understanding about the relationships between PFAS exposure and certain health outcomes to help people understand their risk for health effects. Information from the health study can be applied to communities across the nation.

Seven study partners will conduct the Multi-site Health Study in locations across the United States, including:

- El Paso County, Colorado
- Parchment/Cooper Township, MI, and Belmont/Rockford area, Michigan
- Montgomery and Bucks Counties, Pennsylvania
- Gloucester County, New Jersey
- Hyannis, MA, and Ayer, Massachusetts
- Hoosick Falls, NY, and Newburgh, New York
- Communities near the UC Irvine Medical Center, California

Study recruitment may begin at some sites within the next few months.

More information on the study is available on CDC/ATSDR's [PFAS website](#).

New Resources

Pease Private Well [Health Consultation](#) – Public Comment Version

Evaluation of Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Detected in Private Residential Drinking Water Wells located within 1 Mile of the Pease International Tradeport

PEASE AIR FORCE BASE
PORTSMOUTH, NEWINGRON, AND
GREENLAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Released: April 30, 2020
Public Comment Period Ended: July 30, 2020.

PFAS Education for Healthcare Providers

CDC/ATSDR is teaming up with the [Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units \(PEHSU\)](#) [↗](#) to develop PFAS education for healthcare providers and deliver it in locations where CDC/ATSDR is conducting PFAS public health activities. So far, the PEHSU has delivered clinical Grand Rounds and provided in-clinic public health training to healthcare providers in New Castle, DE; Spokane, WA; and Westfield, MA. Educational events are planned for additional communities in the fall of 2020.

PFAS education helps physicians, nurses, and other health professionals talk to their patients about PFAS exposure and possible health effects. The American Academy of Pediatrics oversees the work of the PEHSU network, which provides communities in all ten federal regions access to a regional PEHSU. For more information visit the [PEHSU website](#) [↗](#).

More CDC/ATSDR information for healthcare providers is available on CDC/ATSDR's [PFAS website](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Does PFAS exposure make vaccines less effective?

Response: CDC/ATSDR recognizes that exposure to high levels of PFAS may impact the immune system. There is evidence from human and animal studies that PFAS exposure may reduce antibody responses to vaccines (Grandjean et al., 2017, Looker et al., 2014), and may reduce infectious disease resistance (NTP, 2016). See references [here](#). However, more research is needed to understand how PFAS exposure may affect vaccine efficacy.

Is there a relationship between PFAS exposure and COVID-19 illness?

Response: COVID-19 is a new public health concern, and there is still much to learn about the virus. More research is needed to understand how PFAS may affect illness from COVID-19.

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