

Forever chemicals: prevalence, risk, and the benefits of blood testing

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a class of man-made chemicals known as “forever chemicals” because they don’t naturally break down.¹ Due to their prevalence in consumer products and tap water, nearly everyone in the US has been exposed to PFAS, leading to potential health risks.¹⁻³ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends taking an exposure history and evaluating PFAS blood testing to inform health promotion strategies.²

→ What are PFAS?

~15,000

man-made chemicals that can build up over time in the blood and organs

45%

of US tap water is contaminated with PFAS, affecting 200M Americans^{1,3,4}

97%

of Americans have PFAS in their blood⁵

→ Where are PFAS?^{3,6}



→ Why are PFAS a problem?



All 50

states have PFAS water contamination sites⁷



~9%

of Americans have PFAS levels of 20 ng/mL or higher⁵

PFAS exposure may lead to health problems⁵:



Decreased response in the immune system



Higher-than-normal lipid levels



Decreased growth in unborn babies and infants



Increased risk of kidney cancer in adults

→ How can PFAS blood testing detect risk?



Clinicians can consider⁸:

- A patient's exposure history
- Results of environmental PFAS testing (e.g., water supply)
- Whether results can inform exposure reduction



Results can provide:

- An indication of how much PFAS has entered a patient's body
- A baseline to monitor changes
- Insights to support conversations about risk factors



To learn more about PFAS testing from Quest Diagnostics, contact your sales representative or email PFASTesting@questdiagnostics.com.

References

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