

# EPA revised Health Advisory Levels for PFAS - FAQ

## What did EPA announce?

On June 15, 2022, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released drinking water lifetime Health Advisory Levels (HALs) for four per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). These included interim HALs for PFOA and PFOS and final HAL for PFBS and GenX.

## What is a lifetime Health Advisory Level (HAL)?

A Health Advisory Level is an amount of a contaminant in drinking water that is almost certain not to cause harmful human health effects if consumed over a lifetime.

The PFOA and PFOS HALs also apply to shorter periods of exposure (months) in sensitive groups (pregnant and lactating persons, children aged birth to 5 years old).

Health advisories are set well below the level at which scientists expect to see health impacts. Health advisories are not regulations and are not enforceable.

PFAS	EPA HALs (2022)	WA SALs (2021)
PFOA	<i>0.004 ppt</i>	10 ppt
PFOS	<i>0.02 ppt</i>	15 ppt
PFNA	-	9 ppt
PFHxS	-	65 ppt
PFBS	2,000 ppt	345 ppt
GenX	10 ppt	-
Italics indicates interim HALs -not yet finalized by EPA ppt = parts per trillion		

## What should you know about the new assessments?

According to EPA new analyses, people drinking water with any detectable concentrations of PFOA or PFOS can decrease their lifetime health risk by reducing their exposure to PFAS in their drinking water..

Learn more about EPA's advice here: <https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos>

EPA is only part way through a multi-year process of setting a drinking water standard for PFAS in drinking water. In the next step of EPA's effort, the agency will finalize its public health goals for PFOS and PFOA and will propose a standard that is as close to the goal as technically feasible while taking costs and benefits into consideration. Balancing costs against the expected benefits allows the Agency to keep costs in proportion to the health benefits expected. EPA expects to propose a drinking water standard by the end of 2022 and adopt a standard by the end of 2023.

## Will Washington change its SAL values based on the new information?

In general, WA SALs are in place until they are replaced by a federal or state maximum contaminant level (MCL). Any change of a SAL requires rule-making by the State Board of Health. EPA's new interim HALs for PFOA and PFOS are still undergoing expert review and may change. After EPA finalizes their values and proposes an MCL for PFOA and PFOA, we will consider whether to recommend adjustment of our SAL values.

## How do HALs differ from WA SALs?

A HAL is based on health science alone. It does not consider if that level can be achieved. EPA's interim HALs for PFOA and PFOS are below what we can accurately measure with approved laboratory methods and below what current PFAS treatment technology is certified or demonstrated to achieve. In contrast, a SAL can't be set below what we can measure in drinking water (2 ppt). SALs also must consider

whether available treatment can reliably attain a SAL. EPA says it is working with third party certifiers to certify water filters that can treat to lower levels.

#### **What's behind the different HAL and SAL values?**

- **PFOA and PFOS.** EPA derived interim HALs from a human study of immune effects in children. The study measured reduced serum antibodies following childhood vaccines. The WA SALs are based on developmental and immune effects observed in controlled rodent studies.
- **PFBS.** The WA SAL and the EPA HAL were derived the same except that EPA used a drinking water intake rate associated with women of reproductive age and WA selected a higher rate of intake associated with infant consumption. While The EPA's HAL provides adequate protection for adults and fetuses, WA's SAL better protects infants which we deemed a sensitive life stage for PFBS.

#### **New public health goals set by EPA for PFOS and PFOA require a broader approach**

We can't reach EPA's new HALs for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water anytime soon. We can't measure those levels in water and aren't sure that PFAS removal technology can treat to those levels in a financially viable manner.

In addition, we'll need a sustained and broader effort to lower exposure from all sources to EPA's recommended exposure limits for PFOA and PFOS. This means reducing PFAS in foods and consumer products, and preventing environmental releases from users of PFAS, waste streams, and disposal sites.

WA has been a leader in this broader approach. In 2018, we were one of the first states to pass restrictions on major sources of PFAS in our food and water (firefighting foam and food packaging). In 2019, our state legislature authorized Ecology to further regulate PFAS in consumer products through the Safer Products for WA Program. Ecology is currently considering restrictions on PFAS in carpets, leather and textile furnishings, and aftermarket stain and waterproofing sprays. Ecology is also investigating occurrence and sources of PFAS in surface water, fish, and key waste streams. DOH developed state action levels for PFAS in drinking water, is administering funding to address PFAS in public water systems, and is developing recommendations for PFAS in recreational freshwater fish. In 2021, WA Depts of Ecology and Health issued a statewide action plan for PFAS to guide state work. <https://ecology.wa.gov/Waste-Toxics/Reducing-toxic-chemicals/Addressing-priority-toxic-chemicals/PFAS> . EPA is also taking action at the federal level <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/epa-actions-address-pfas>