



Division of Water Quality Management

## Ensuring Safety of Private Water Supplies

### What is a Private Water Supply?

Your water supply is considered private if your drinking water does not come from a public water system (for example, if you get your water from a household well or spring). If you have a private water supply, you alone are responsible for assuring that it is safe to drink.

### Why Should I Have My Water Tested?

Water testing is one way to make sure your drinking water at home is safe to drink. When water has an odd taste, color, or odor, or leaves a stain on clothes or fixtures, these may be signs of possible water quality problems. The proximity of your water supply to septic systems or industrial sites, and the composition of your home's plumbing materials, may contribute to poor water quality.

### When and How Should I Get My Water Tested?

It is recommended that private water supplies be tested every year for total coliform bacteria, nitrates, total dissolved solids, and pH levels to make sure they are within acceptable levels. Testing should be conducted by a laboratory that is certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP).

[PADEP certified laboratories](#)

Most laboratories will supply sample containers for you to use. Carefully follow the instructions given by the testing laboratory for collecting, preserving, and handling your water samples to ensure the most accurate results.

### Testing Your Water for Organic Compounds

Organic compounds such as gasoline, industrial solvents or paint thinner, may seep into your water supply as the result of industrial spills or routine operations. If you are concerned about organic chemicals in your water supply, you can hire a laboratory to test your water. Tests can be expensive so limit the testing to possible chemicals that are specific to your situation.

### Per or Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

PFAS are a group of man-made, organic chemicals found in everyday household products such as some cooking pans and packaging materials as well as in industrial processes that involve adhesives, chrome plating, and electronics manufacturing. PFAS has been present in fire-fighting foam used at military bases.

Having your water tested for PFAS can be expensive and only specialized laboratories should conduct these tests. EPA recommends a lab that is approved to use the EPA 537 method, a specialized method for the detection of PFAS.

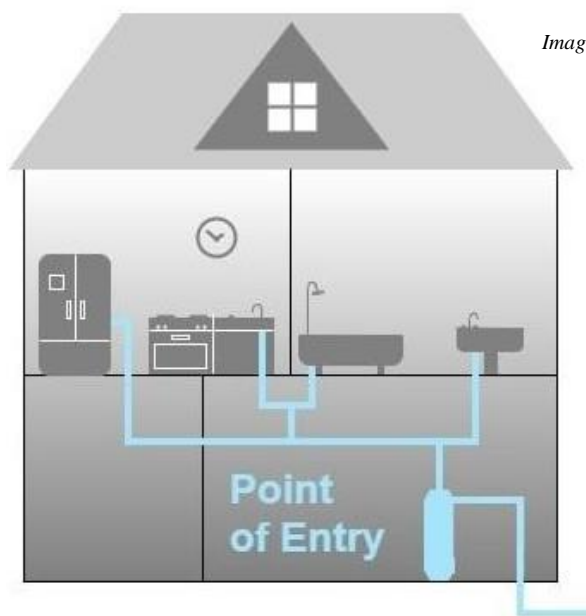
[EPA suggested laboratories](#)

## Home Water Filtration Systems for PFAS & other Organic Chemicals

Research studies have shown that certain water filtration systems, namely point-of-use filters, can remove trace organic compounds in drinking water\*. Based on these studies, there are two primary types of filtration systems, if properly maintained, that can potentially reduce PFAS levels in water. These include one or both of the following:

- *Granulated Activated Carbon* which can be installed in a refrigerator, faucet, or pitcher filter or installed on your water line
- *Reverse Osmosis* which uses energy to push water through a membrane filter

Whichever technology you choose, it is important to ensure the systems are maintained according to the manufacturer specifications. It is important to note, boiling your water or using a water softener will not remove PFAS from your water.



*Image provided by the state of Massachusetts*

### **For Additional Information:**

[Montgomery County Office of Public Health](#)

[Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry \(ATSDR\)](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection](#)

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[\\*National Science Foundation \(NSF\) International-approved devices](#)

[Specific PFAS treatment devices](#)

[General information about treatment options](#)