

How to Conduct a Clinical Visit with Patients Concerned About PFAS Exposure

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are being detected in the drinking water of communities around the country. As more locations are identified, members from affected communities may contact their healthcare providers with concerns about the effects of exposure and whether they should be tested.

Health professionals working in affected communities are encouraged to follow the guidance below to help navigate discussions with patients who are concerned about PFAS exposure.

1. **Be prepared.** Review the resources and materials included in this packet and contact your local Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) [www.pehsu.net/findhelp] with any questions.
2. **Be empathetic.** Actively listen and validate patients' concerns. Be clear and honest about what you do and don't know about PFAS exposure and health outcomes. Establishing trust will increase the likelihood that your patients will act on your recommendations.
3. **Discuss exposure reduction strategies.** If the PFAS level detected in a patient's drinking water exceeds the EPA's health advisory and/or state guidelines, share actions they can take to reduce their exposure (e.g., water filtration, using bottled water). These are outlined in the "[PFAS FAQs Fact Sheet](#)" that can be sent home with patients.
4. **Promote standard preventive care measures.** Follow best practices for general health and wellness preventive care (i.e., Bright Futures and Clinical Preventive Services guide). When health concerns arise that might be associated with PFAS, it is important to do a complete exposure history, physical exam, and appropriate laboratory evaluation if indicated by the reported signs and symptoms in accordance with established evidence-based guidelines.
5. **Explore shared decision-making options.** After discussing your patient's concerns, what is known about PFAS, and the current recommendations regarding PFAS testing, patients may still request testing. It is important to discuss the risks and benefits including the cost of various tests, the lack of correlation to health effects, and lack of change in clinical recommendations. If the shared decision is made to order a PFAS blood and/or urine test, you can contact your local PEHSU with questions regarding testing and/or interpretation of results.