



# EPA New Health Advisory for PFOA and PFOS Talking Points

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*“For more information on EPA Health Advisories, regulations, PFOA, and PFOS please visit: <https://www3.epa.gov/>”*

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## First: What you need to know

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a new drinking water health advisory for health risks associated with a lifetime exposure to perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), which are toxic compounds that have been historically used in carpets, clothing, food packaging, and a number of industrial processes. These chemicals while not regulated by the EPA are still monitored in water levels as long-term exposure can lead to cancer and other adverse health conditions under medical study. The City of Stuart was subsequently notified by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) of the new EPA Health Advisory and impacted utilities in Florida including Stuart.

## What is a Health Advisory?

EPA health advisories are based on the best available peer-reviewed studies on laboratory animals (rats and mice) and are also typically informed through epidemiological studies of human populations with exposure to certain chemicals and compounds. Health advisories like the risks of liver damage due to exposure to high levels of acetaminophen in products like Tylenol, or warnings found on all tobacco products are a way to inform the public of the long-term risks associated with certain toxic chemicals. The PFOA and PFOS Health Advisory was developed as a means of changing the measurement system of public consumption of water that includes measurable levels of these compounds from weeks and months of exposure to a “lifetime” or many years of exposure.

## How is Stuart impacted?

Before May 19<sup>th</sup> the City of Stuart utility system was not under a health advisory as the City water quality results did not exceed the *200 parts per Trillion* levels associated with a health risk from PFOA and PFOS exposure. When EPA issued the new advisory, it lowered this number down to *70 parts per Trillion*. The City of Stuart and several other utilities in EPA’s southeast region (4) as a result, are now exceeding these new acceptable levels. Both the Florida DEP and EPA have provided fact sheets on the new Health Advisory and are providing assistance in informing the public.

## What actions is the City taking?

While the EPA's sudden advisory change has taken most states and local utilities by surprise, the City of Stuart has already taken proactive measures to provide City residents with more accurate information. New well samples have been recently extracted from every raw-water well source the city uses for its drinking water. These samples have since been hand-delivered to the lab that will determine which well(s) if any, have elevated levels of PFOA and PFOS. In the short term, if any well is determined to have elevated levels of either of these compounds, it will be shut down and other wells will instead carry a greater load of raw water output for processing. In the long term, the City will be analyzing further steps to take if a more permanent solution is required. Preliminary lab results indicate to city staff to the source of the contamination and future actions necessary to maintain levels of PFOS and PFOA that the EPA considers to be safe according to the new guidelines.

## How am I affected?

PFOA and PFOS are organic compounds that when consumed at higher levels over a lifetime can lead to cancer and various other dangerous medical conditions. More importantly, the EPA has stated that pregnant or nursing mothers should refrain from using or consuming water containing levels of PFOA or PFOS greater than 70 parts per trillion. The City of Stuart advises nursing or pregnant mothers to follow the new EPA health advisory and not to consume drinking water from the City until these PFOA and PFOS levels can be lowered below the new guidelines. While the source of the contamination is not yet known, the City is working to identify wells with elevated levels and will notify residents once the source has been shut off from use.

## What else should I know?

The World Health Organization, U.S. Surgeon General, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, among others, believe the advantages of breastfeeding greatly outweigh the potential risks in nearly every circumstance. EPA encourages women that are currently pregnant, are nursing, or are bottle feeding an infant with formula to consult with their physician regarding concerns related to breastfeeding and potential exposure to chemicals such as PFOA and PFOS.

Because scientific evidence indicates that exposure to PFOA and PFOS may have adverse effects on the development of fetuses or breastfed infants, if EPA's health advisory level is exceeded, pregnant and lactating women and caregivers preparing bottles of formula for infants may wish to seek an alternative drinking water source, or use formula that does not require adding water while the system is taking action to reduce levels of PFOA and PFOS.

## Where to go for more information

- ❖ For more information on EPA Health Advisories, regulations, PFOA, and PFOS please visit: <https://www3.epa.gov/>