



FACT SHEET

Connecticut Department of Public Health
Environmental Health Section
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<http://www.ct.gov/dph/>

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What You Need To Know About: **Tetrachloroethylene in Private Well Water**

Tetrachloroethylene is found in some public and private groundwater drinking water wells in Connecticut. The US Environmental Protection Agency requires regular testing for this chemical in public water systems. Private wells can also have tetrachloroethylene, but testing in these wells must usually be done by the well owner.

This fact sheet addresses health concerns and treatment questions about tetrachloroethylene in private well water. For more information, please see the contact information at the end of this document.

What Is Tetrachloroethylene?

Tetrachloroethylene, also known as perchloroethylene, PCE, PERC, and tetrachloroethene, is a chemical that is widely used for dry cleaning of fabrics and for metal-degreasing. This chemical can get into well water when groundwater comes in contact with a spill or other release to the environment. Tetrachloroethylene is one of the more common non-natural chemicals found in Connecticut's groundwater.

What Is The Hazard Associated With Tetrachloroethylene In Drinking Water?

Tetrachloroethylene has caused liver and kidney damage and cancer in animals exposed to high levels. Based on these facts, tetrachloroethylene is believed to probably cause cancer in people. Drinking water that has tetrachloroethylene may increase a person's risk of cancer. However, it is unlikely that the levels of tetrachloroethylene typically found in drinking water would be harmful to your health over a short period of time.

How Might I Be Exposed To Tetrachloroethylene From My Well Water?

Tetrachloroethylene evaporates easily from water, so in addition to taking it into your body through drinking, you may also be exposed to a large amount from breathing the air inside your home. Tetrachloroethylene gets into indoor air from appliances that use water (such as dishwashers and washing machines) and from the shower. Your body may also absorb it through the skin during a bath or shower. A simple way to absorb less is to turn on a bathroom fan while bathing or showering. This can prevent the buildup of tetrachloroethylene in the bathroom air.

What You Need To Know About: Tetrachloroethylene in Private Well Water (continued)

Is There A Safe Level Of Tetrachloroethylene In Drinking Water?

The US EPA has set a maximum containment level (MCL) of 5 micrograms per liter (ug/L) for tetrachloroethylene in public drinking water. An MCL is a federal drinking water standard that is set for chemicals in drinking water. When drinking water has levels of a contaminant above the MCL on a regular basis, it means that the water does not meet EPA's health-based standard and something must be done to lower the amount of the chemical or find another water supply. MCLs are set well below the level that causes health effects in people or animals. So if a person has tetrachloroethylene in their well water at levels above the MCL, it is still probably at a level lower than what is harmful to a person's health. However, it is always a good idea to lower the levels in your water to below the MCL to decrease any chance for harm to your health.

How Can I Find Out If There Is a Problem With My Drinking Water?

The best way is to have your well water tested by a state-certified water testing lab. Instructions on how to find a lab in your area are found at the end of this fact sheet. You can also call CT DEP at (860) 424-3705, or your local health department, and ask if they are aware of a contamination problem in your neighborhood. CT DEP's "List of Contaminated or Potentially Contaminated Sites in Connecticut" can be found on the CT DEP web site (<http://www.ct.gov/dep>).

What Can Be Done If a Private Well Has Tetrachloroethylene?

If tests show that your well has tetrachloroethylene you should call CT DEP at (860) 424-3705 and the local health department to report the problem. They may investigate to see where the contamination is coming from. If the levels are above the MCL, CT DEP should be able to give you a temporary alternate source of drinking water such as bottled water or they may have a treatment system installed for your well.

Whom Can I Contact For More Information?

For answers to questions about tetrachloroethylene in drinking water, contact the Connecticut Department of Public Health or the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection below:

Health Questions:

CT Dept. of Public Health
Environmental Health Section
Environmental & Occupational
Health Assessment Program
860- 509-7740
PO Box 340308, MS # 11CHA
Hartford, CT 06134-0308
<http://www.ct.gov/dph>

Treatment Questions:

To learn about treatment or report a contamination problem, call the CT Department of Environmental Protection (**860-424-3705**).

State Certified Laboratories:

Go to the DPH home page (<http://www.ct.gov/dph>) ; click on "Environmental Health," click on "Environmental Laboratories" and then scroll down to "List of Laboratories."