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The Columbus Dispatch

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FOREVER CHEMICALS

PFAS are linked to cancer and fertility issues, and they're in your water. Is Ohio ready to do something about it?

STORY, 10A

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Community	Chemical	2020	2021
Loveland	PFOS	14.8-24*	14*
Indian Hill	PFOS	6.4-14.5*	12.1*
Milford	PFOS	7.1-13*	1.4*
Cincinnati	PFOS	3.1-5.3*	4.1-5.7*
Bolton	PFOS	Not Detected	
Miller	PFOS		

ABOVE: Sharon Scovanner pours drinking water from a filtration pitcher she uses at her home in Loveland on July 23. BELOW: A table shows levels for PFOS found in the drinking water of Loveland and its surrounding communities, shown at the home of Scovanner.

PHOTOS BY SAM GREENE/CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Is Ohio ready for new forever chemical regulations?

State must treat drinking water on local level and PFAS at its source

Erin Glynn | Columbus Dispatch | USA TODAY NETWORK

Loveland resident Sharon Scovanner only drinks filtered water. • She’s concerned about her city’s reported level of PFAS compounds in the public water system and the potential health risks of continued exposure to the chemicals, which linger in the environment and in human bodies. • Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, abbreviated PFAS, are chemicals first manufactured in the 1940s. They have been linked to certain cancers, fertility issues and other health concerns.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced new rules on the levels of PFAS in public water systems in April, which the agency estimates will prevent “thousands of deaths and reduce tens of thousands of serious PFAS-attributable illnesses.”

Systems have until 2027 to begin monitoring for PFAS and until 2029 to start treating PFAS in the water.

The USA TODAY Network Ohio bureau spoke to Ohio residents and researchers to get a sense of why these regulations exist and how they will affect the state.

‘We can’t get it out of our environment’

Cincinnati lawyer Robert Bilott sounded the alarm about PFAS after visiting Parkersburg, West Virginia, and alerting the U.S. EPA about the effects on local residents in 2001. Bilott dedicated his career to going after PFAS manufacturers like DuPont and 3M. The movie “Dark Waters” was based on his story starring Mark Ruffalo as Bilott.

Dr. Susan Pinney, a professor of environmental health at the University of Cincinnati, said many studies have shown there are health effects of PFAS in all age groups and it’s important to minimize exposure as much as possible.

“Since you know it’s going to be in our environment, probably for hundreds of years, we can do our best to minimize what gets into our body, and that’s what the EPA is trying to do with their water standards and water regulation,” she said.

PFAS exposure linked to delayed puberty, increased cholesterol

The chemicals’ presence in peoples’ bodies has been linked to delayed puberty, kidney and testicular cancer, fertility issues and increased cholesterol according to studies.

Pinney’s study involved looking at three milestones of puberty, breast development, first appearance of pubic hair and first menstrual period. The study focused on girls in the Greater Cincinnati area and San Francisco Bay area to measure the effects of PFAS exposure.

The study found evidence that the compound PFOA in particular was associated with delayed puberty. Pinney said the delay relates to the production of cholesterol in the liver.

“Cholesterol is the building block of all hormones, and there are certain types of cholesterol that are used in building the reproductive hormones and girls. So we think it goes back to that and that’s why they have lower hormone levels, and therefore, later pubertal development,” she said.

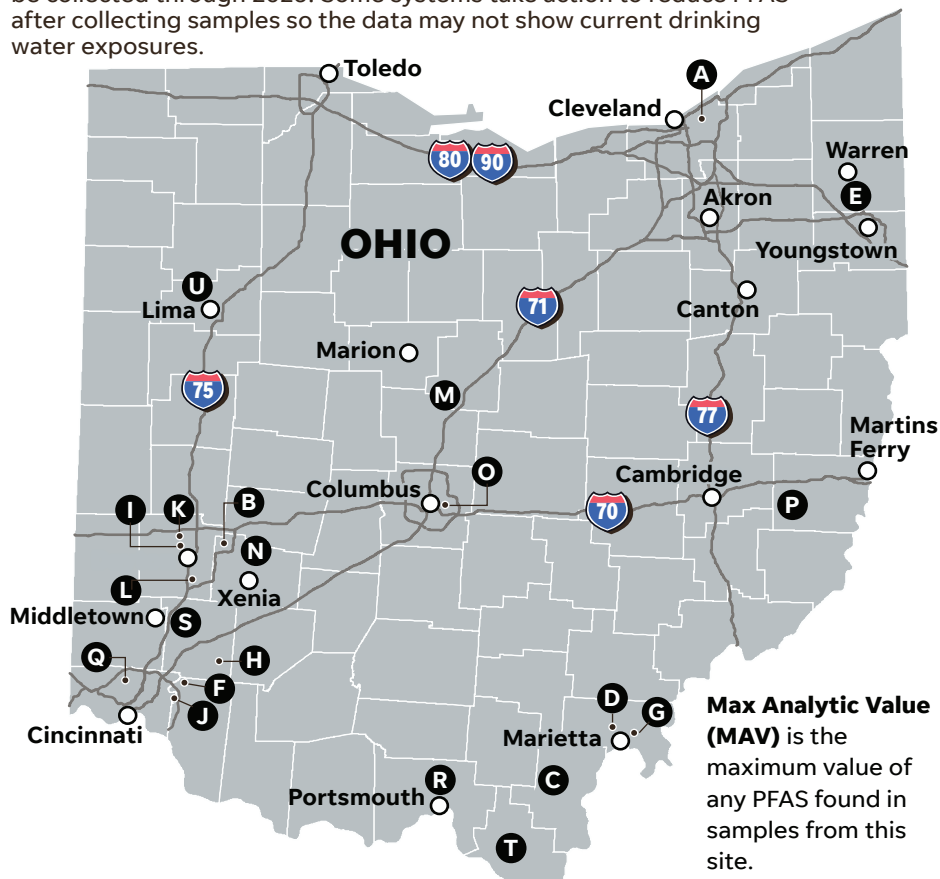
The study found that girls with more PFAS in their serum were at a lower BMI until their first menstrual period which Pinney said raises questions about potential implications for various diseases later in life. Researchers also found that girls with PFAS exposure might be more vulnerable to developing polycystic ovary syndrome.

“People who work with studying PFAS in the laboratory will tell you that the cells are sticky, which I find very interesting.”

Continued on next page

Water systems with PFAS above limits

U.S. EPA data shows 21 public water systems in Ohio that reported PFAS levels over the health advisory limits. Samples were collected starting in 2023 and will be collected through 2025. Some systems take action to reduce PFAS after collecting samples so the data may not show current drinking water exposures.



Public water system	MAV
A. City of Cleveland Heights	400
B. Wright-Patterson AFB Area	160
C. Gallia Co. Rural Water Assn	20
D. Warren Comm W and S Assn 2	20
E. McDonald Village	18
F. Loveland City	16
G. Putnam Comm Water Assn	14
H. Western Water Company	14
I. Grandview Medical Center	11
J. Indian Hill City	11
K. Dayton PWS	10

Public water system	MAV
L. Montgomery Co. Water Services	10
M. Delaware Co. WC	9
N. Yellow Springs Village PWS	9
O. Bexley City PWS	8
P. Barnesville, OH	7
Q. Cincinnati PWS	6
R. Portsmouth PWS	5
S. Franklin PWS	4
T. Hecla Water Assn Plant PWS	4
U. Lima City	3

SOURCE: U.S. EPA

Erin Glynn/USA Today Ohio and Michael Nyerges / THE ENQUIRER

Continued from previous page

You know, when you think about that, what would that happen? What would happen then in the ovaries? We're continuing to study those things," Pinney said.

21 Ohio water systems have high levels of forever chemicals

Twenty-one public water systems in Ohio have a level of forever chemicals that can be hazardous to peoples' health, according to U.S. EPA data. The City of Cleveland Heights and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton had the highest levels of PFAS in the state.

Pinney said there's a number of communities with levels that are now above the U.S. EPA's regulatory standard but meeting that standard will require installing improved technology to reduce the PFAS levels.

"I don't think anybody is opposed to bringing down the levels," she said. "The question is, what is the cost? And where is that money going to come from?"

Calling attention to and reducing PFAS in drinking water is a personal crusade for Scovanner, whose father, a Marine at Camp Lejeune, died of one of the associated cancers from drinking water at the base.

"I don't want to see what happened to my dad happen to anybody. It's awful," she said.

Scovanner has been compiling a notebook since December about Loveland's contamination levels, all with publicly available information or public records requests. She said Loveland has made claims about the health effects of PFAS in a federal lawsuit that differ from the information the city gives its residents.

"I just know they didn't tell us. They are telling us to continue to drink the water, they're saying it's safe, and that is not accurate. No official governmental agency that has any credence on this topic would agree with that," she said.

Loveland Assistant City Manager Chris Wojnicz said, in his opinion, the city has done as good a job as possible sharing the information that they have with the public.

"We continue to say to our customers that our water quality meets all current and enforced standards from the Ohio EPA," he said, noting that Loveland is subject to its regulators, the Ohio and U.S. EPA.

Wojnicz estimates it will cost the city \$17.5 million to implement granular activated carbon treatment, which he said is the most cost-effective option. The city could pay for some of it with grants administered by the state and Wojnicz estimates that 15% could come from payouts from the class action lawsuit against PFAS manufacturers like Dupont and 3M.

Lauren Edna, former Loveland resident who now lives in Lima, said it's not easy for city officials to tell residents they need to filter their water but people can't be drinking water that could be bad for them.

What does treatment look like?

Battelle, a research institute based in Columbus, has been aware of PFAS for about 20 years.

Amy Dindal, director of Battelle's environment and agriculture business line, said researchers were helping epidemiologists collect data for a health study in Parkersburg, West Virginia that became part of the story in "Dark Waters."

Five years later, Battelle researchers helped with cleanup of a U.S. Navy site and found mysterious foam coming out of an air stripper, which is a machine that forces air through contaminated water so certain chemical compounds will evaporate.

"We took that back to our laboratory, and we identified it as PFOA and PFOS," she said. "That was before it was really on the radar from a brick and mortar per-

See **REGULATIONS, Page 13A**

What to know about PFAS and drinking water

PFAS, also known as forever chemicals, are found in some household products and public water systems. The U.S. EPA announced new rules regulating PFAS in drinking water in April.

Here's what to know about the chemicals:

What are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, abbreviated PFAS, are manufactured chemicals that take a long time to break down. They linger in the environment and in our bodies which is why they're called forever chemicals.

The chemicals are used especially in waterproof or nonstick products like cookware, dental floss and umbrellas.

They are measured in extremely small amounts: parts per trillion.

Do I have forever chemicals in my blood?

It's likely. Almost everyone in the country has been exposed to PFAS

How do PFAS get into drinking water?

PFAS can enter drinking water near locations where they are manufactured or used in product manufacturing or where they are disposed of, like landfills, according to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

Video

Scan this QR code to learn about PFAS and how Columbus-based firm Battelle develops technology to eliminate "forever chemicals"



How to limit exposure to PFAS in your air and water

It seems like forever chemicals are everywhere: in our homes, our drinking water and our bodies.

While tackling PFAS contamination will take more than individual choices, it is possible to limit one's exposure to PFAS.

Dr. Susan Pinney, director of the Center for Environmental Genetics at the University of Cincinnati noted that there are other sources of PFAS that are important to consider as communities work to remove forever chemicals from drinking water.

Here are a few steps you can take:

Consider home filters for drinking water

If you live in an area with PFAS levels above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's health advisory limits, you can use a filter either attached to a water pitcher or directly to a faucet.

Look for the information about the filter's process. Granular activated carbon and reverse osmosis are both tested methods for reducing PFAS, according to the U.S. EPA.

Replace old nonstick or Teflon pans

Pinney said old Teflon pans are another concerning

The chemicals can also be found in the air near manufacturing facilities and enter drinking water via rainwater runoff or by seeping through the soil into underground drinking water sources.

What are the health effects of PFAS?

The chemicals have been linked to kidney and testicular cancer, increased cholesterol and pregnancy complications like preeclampsia and hypertension, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

A study from the University of Cincinnati showed an association between PFAS exposure and delayed puberty in girls based on samples of the girls' blood serum.

What can we do about forever chemicals?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set new limits on the levels of PFAS in public water systems. Systems have until 2027 to begin monitoring for PFAS and until 2029 to start treating PFAS in the water.

New technology means scientists are able to examine PFAS samples and detect the source, as well as destroy PFAS sources like firefighting foam.

source of PFAS exposure, particularly if they are scratched or look especially worn.

The Center for Environmental Genetics held an event to encourage people to trade in old frying pans for a coupon to help pay for a new pan. Look out for similar events in your area, especially around Earth Day.

Be careful with older furniture, carpets and clothing

Older furniture and carpet with stain-resistant coatings can contain PFAS, Pinney said. As the furniture gets older, the Teflon can flake off the furniture and become part of the dust in a home.

Older outerwear can also be a concern as jackets used to be manufactured with water-resistant coatings that contained PFAS.

Consider an air filter

PFAS can be absorbed from inhaling particles in dust. Air filters can remove some of that dust.

"People think about that being important so their home doesn't get dusty, but there are benefits other than just reducing the amount you have to clean," Pinney said.



Lauren Edna, member of the Sierra Club Miami Group, talks about her experience with Loveland's drinking water quality at the home of Sharon Scovanner in Loveland on July 23. SAM GREENE/CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Regulations

Continued from Page 11A

spective. But we knew that sites were starting to be challenged with this emerging contaminant. We called it back then.”

Since then, Battelle has focused on identifying and treating PFAS at its source or where its contaminating the environment before it gets into public water systems. The institute also developed technology they call the PFAS Annihilator to safely dispose of PFAS. The annihilator uses heat exchangers, salt separators and a reactor to transform a concentrated stream of PFAS into clean water with no byproducts.

Battelle also uses granular activated carbon filtration to handle wastewater treatment. The same technology is used to treat some public water systems.

Pinney found during her study that girls in Northern Kentucky had higher levels of PFAS in their serum than girls in Greater Cincinnati which she attributes to the fact that Greater Cincinnati Water Works began using granular activated carbon filtration by the mid 1990s.

“When we did our first analysis in about 2004 of serum in these girls, we can immediately see a difference in the level of PFAS when comparing the girls from Greater Cincinnati to the girls from Northern Kentucky, because Northern Kentucky didn’t have [carbon filtration], so we could see it right away,” she said.

Pinney noted that Northern Kentucky water systems have since used granular activated carbon filtration.

Battelle has developed PFAS Signature technology to examine samples of PFAS and identify it among hundreds of different PFAS compounds, far more than the compounds the U.S. EPA currently regulates. This helps the researchers find the source of a particular PFAS sample, like direct sources like manufacturing products or firefighting foam, Dindal said, which can help them figure out the best methods to address the contamination.

“If you understand where those sources are coming from, you can better address them before they get into the drinking water,” she said.

It could take 10 years to reduce PFAS in the body

PFAS has a half life of about four years. Pinney said it would take probably a dec-



ade to see a measurable decrease in health effects from PFAS, assuming no more is added to the body in that time.

“Whatever I drink today in my water, it will take about four years for half of it to leave my body. So you can see, once we reduce the amount, over time, the levels and serum will come down,” she said.

To begin that process, drinking water must be under the new regulations which will mean not only treating drinking water at the municipal level but also addressing PFAS at its source. Dindal said that treating PFAS in drinking water is like treating a symptom of disease as opposed to addressing the disease itself.

In the meantime, Scovanner is still concerned about her city’s aquifer, which lies close to the Little Miami River.

“It looks beautiful here,” Scovanner said, gesturing to green fields above the aquifer and lush trees that border them. “We just don’t know what’s lying underneath.”

Erin Glynn is a reporter for the USA TODAY Network Ohio Bureau, which serves the Columbus Dispatch, Cincinnati Enquirer, Akron Beacon Journal and 18 other affiliated news organizations across Ohio.



Amy Dindal, Battelle Director of Environment & Agriculture Business Line, and Larry Mullins, Battelle chemist, are helping develop a PFAS Annihilator at the Columbus-based research facility. As new federal EPA regulations regarding PFAS are looming, states like Ohio are preparing to comply. PHOTOS BY DORAL CHENOWETH/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

On the cover: Illustration by Jason Bredehoeft/ USA TODAY NETWORK; photo by Getty Images

Poll: Supreme Court a top issue for Dems

Recent decisions raise their worry on election

Maureen Gropp and Sam Woodward
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Americans overwhelmingly agree that the outcome of the next presidential election will have a major impact on the future of the Supreme Court, according to a new USA TODAY-Ipsos poll.

But the poll also shows the issue is more of a motivator for Democrats than for Republicans or independents.

“To me, it’s very important because whoever shapes the court, basically, is going to shape our lives for the future,” said Vicki Sestok, a 56-year-old Democrat from Palmerton, Pennsylvania.

While more than 4 of every 5 adults surveyed said the election will impact the court, 59% of Democrats strongly agreed with that statement, compared with 42% of independents and 38% of Republicans.

Democrats were also more likely to rank the court as an important issue in deciding how they will vote. Seven of every 10 Democrats called it “very important,” compared with fewer than half of Republicans or independents.

Independent John Tran, a 33-year-old middle school history teacher from California, disagrees with some of the court’s recent decisions, including overturning Roe v. Wade. But Tran, who hasn’t decided who he will support for president in November, said issues that have a day-to-day impact on his life — like the economy — are more important in swaying his vote.

And David Pier, a 76-year-old retiree from Ohio who usually votes Republican, said immigration and the economy are the top reasons he’s supporting former President Donald Trump.

“I think they do a great job,” Pier said of the current Supreme Court.

Democrats were also the most familiar with major recent court decisions — including on abortion and presidential immunity — and with proposed reforms such as term limits.

“Filling the seats on the Supreme Court has become certainly a political



In a new poll, Democrats were more likely to rank the Supreme Court as an important issue in deciding how they will vote. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS FILE

issue, but one that Democratic politicians can use to galvanize their base,” said Mallory Newall, vice president for public affairs at Ipsos. “Democrats have seen during a Trump presidency multiple nominees to the Supreme Court, and I think we’ve seen the outcome of that.”

Trump, in 2016, said he would appoint justices who would undo the constitutional right to an abortion.

He was able to fulfill that campaign promise in part because Senate Republicans blocked President Barack Obama from filling an opening in his last year and, in Trump’s last months, pushed through his third nomination.

“Thanks to these justices, we have also achieved what the pro-life movement fought to get for 49 years,” Trump told a conference of Christian conservative voters in June.

Leah Granstrom, a 23-year-old teacher from Saint Paul, Minnesota, said seeing how the court’s decisions can affect her life has made Supreme Court nominations a bigger issue for her.

“It’s horrifying watching people from all over the country not able to receive proper medical care, or abortion care, any other reproductive care,” said Granstrom, a Democrat.

“As a young woman, that’s frightening to watch.”

Even for some not in need of reproductive care, the decision is catapulting them to vote for Democrats in November.

Cheryl Rodefer, a private school tutor and 62-year-old independent from Ohio, said that she blames Trump and doesn’t trust him to not take any more rights away from people.

“I don’t agree with having an abortion, but I don’t agree with telling a woman what to do with her body,” she said. “I do think the whole complexion of the Supreme Court could go either way based on whoever we elect this term.”

Larry Forrer, a 52-year-old travel agent from Arlington, Virginia, said his concerns about what Trump would do to the Supreme Court if he won the 2016 election became reality. And now he’s thinking about what openings the next occupant of the White House may get to fill.

“You’ve got some very conservative judges that are up there that may retire,” said Forrer, a Democrat. “If they do, it’s a way to rebalance the court to make it more equitable and fair, more in line with where Americans are.”

The court’s longest serving justice, Clarence Thomas, is 76. Justice Samuel Alito, who authored the opinion in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization that overturned Roe v. Wade, is 74.

The most senior liberal justice, Sonya Sotomayor, is 70.

While limiting justices to 18-year terms was supported by 63% of those surveyed, the proposal was backed by 83% of Democrats.

The term limit was among the court reforms President Joe Biden pitched last month as he was passing the torch to Vice President Kamala Harris.

Since taking over the top of the Democrats’ ticket, Harris has talked about the Supreme Court when attacking Trump.

She’s criticized him for putting on the court enough justices to overturn Roe v. Wade, and she’s gone after the court’s conservative majority for granting immunity protections to presidents, a decision that delayed — and could prevent — Trump from being prosecuted for trying to overturn the 2020 election.

The Supreme Court, Harris said at a recent campaign event in California, “basically just told the former president, who has been convicted of fraud, that going forth, he will effectively be immune no matter what he does in the White House.”

More than three-fourths of Democrats — compared to 64% of all poll respondents — said they were familiar with the immunity ruling. About 8 in 10 Democrats said the decision is a “major threat to democracy.” Half of independents called it a major threat, as did just 14% of Republicans.

Legal historian Stuart Banner, author of an upcoming book on the history of the Supreme Court, said the justices have always been criticized for making decisions based on political, rather than legal, grounds.

Except between the 1940s and the early 1970s when the court tacked left, the justices have more often been on the right of the political spectrum, so most of the criticism has come from the left.

The poll was conducted from Aug. 2 to 4, surveyed 1,024 adults and had a margin of error of 3.2%.