



# Health Based Guidance Values for PFAS FOR USE IN SITE INVESTIGATIONS IN AUSTRALIA

In June 2016, the Department of Health commissioned Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to develop final health based guidance values for perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS), which belong to a group of chemicals known as per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

The Department of Health has received FSANZ's *Hazard Assessment Report—PFOS, PFOA and PFHxS* with its recommendations for Australia's final health based guidance values.

The final health based guidance values will be used consistently in undertaking human health risk assessments across Australia. The recommended health based guidance values have replaced the Environmental Health Standing Committee's (enHealth) interim human health reference values.

The final health based guidance values are protective of human health; are a precautionary measure for use when conducting site investigations; and are to assist in providing advice to affected communities on how to minimise exposure to PFAS.

## What is a health based guidance value?

Health based guidance values indicate the amount of a chemical in food or drinking water that a person can consume on a regular basis over a lifetime without any significant risk to health. Health based guidance values can be expressed as a tolerable monthly intake (TMI), a tolerable weekly intake (TWI) or a tolerable daily intake (TDI). The choice of whether a TMI, TWI or TDI is set depends on the nature of the chemical.

Health based guidance values are used by organisations and government agencies to investigate and assess potential human health risks.

## Final health based guidance values for use in site investigations in Australia

FSANZ has recommended final health based guidance values for PFOS and PFOA in the form of a tolerable daily intake. A tolerable daily intake is a level of daily oral exposure over a lifetime that is considered to be without significant health risk for humans.

Based on FSANZ's recommended tolerable daily intake, the Department of Health has calculated revised drinking water quality and recreational water quality values for use in site investigations in Australia.

To determine the drinking and recreational water quality values for site investigations across Australia, the Department of Health used the final tolerable daily intakes for PFOS and PFOA and the methodology described in Chapter 6.3.3 of the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines*. This approach is consistent with the one used by enHealth in developing the interim values in 2016.

The health based guidance values for use in site investigations in Australia are:

Toxicity reference value	PFOS/PFHxS		PFOA	
	ng	µg	ng	µg
Tolerable daily intake (ng or µg / kg bw/day)	20	0.02	160	0.16
Drinking water quality value (ng or µg /L)	70	0.07	560	0.56
Recreational water quality value (ng or µg /L)	700	0.7	5,600	5.6

Note: bw = body weight, ng = nanograms, µg = micrograms

## How did FSANZ determine the health based guidance values?

The tolerable daily intake for PFOS and PFOA are derived from the results of toxicity studies in laboratory animals. FSANZ concluded that the current available epidemiological data on human health is not suitable to support the derivation of tolerable daily intake levels for PFOS and PFOA.

A pharmacokinetic modelling approach was used to extrapolate data for humans, noting that animal physiology is not the same as human.

For PFHxS, FSANZ concluded that there was not enough toxicological and epidemiological information to justify establishing a tolerable daily intake. However, as a precaution, and for the purposes of site investigations, the PFOS tolerable daily intake should apply to PFHxS. In practice, this means that the level of PFHxS exposure should be added to the level of PFOS exposure; and this combined level be compared to the tolerable daily intake for PFOS.

The tolerable daily intakes include conservative assumptions to ensure the protection of public health.

FSANZ's report and recommended health based guidance values have been nationally and internationally peer reviewed.

## How will the final health based guidance values impact communities affected by PFAS contamination?

Commonwealth agencies and other organisations that conduct site investigations for PFAS contamination can use the health based guidance values to assist in assessing human health risk. Agencies or organisations that have recently conducted human health risk assessments for PFAS contamination may review their assessments and advice based on the final health based guidance values.

Advice on reducing exposure to PFAS will vary with each location so you should follow the most current advice provided by your state or territory government, and if available, the human health risk assessment for your area conducted by the investigating agency.

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### *Further information*

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For further information regarding health based guidance values and the Department of Health's response to PFAS contamination, please visit the Department of Health website ([health.gov.au/pfas](http://health.gov.au/pfas))

Alternatively you can contact the Department of Health by phone on 1800 941 180 or by email: [health.PFAS@health.gov.au](mailto:health.PFAS@health.gov.au)