






Home Water Treatment for PFAS



A guide to reducing PFAS levels in your household tap water.

-  Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large family of human-made chemicals used since the 1940s to make many stain-resistant, water-resistant, and non-stick products. PFAS do not break down naturally, and stay in the environment for a long time.
 -  Some PFAS can build up in your body and, over time, may cause negative health impacts such as increased risk of kidney cancer, lower birth weights and reduced antibody response. People can be exposed to PFAS by drinking or cooking with contaminated water.
 -  At-home water treatment systems filter contaminants out of water, and can help reduce your exposure to PFAS in household tap water used for drinking and cooking.
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Point of Use (POU) Water Treatment Systems

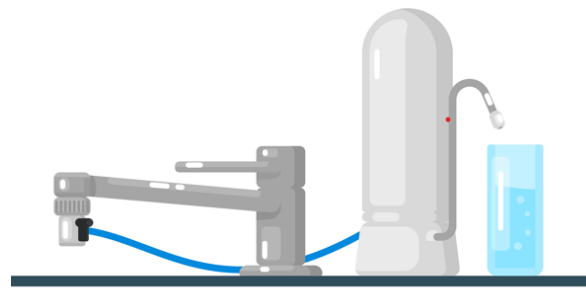
Also known as “Under the Sink” or “Countertop” water filters.

POU water treatment systems filter tap water at your main source, like the kitchen sink, for drinking and cooking. They can be purchased online or at your local home improvement store. Every household has different needs. Several filter styles are available—look at the information on the filter’s box to decide which one is best for your home.

Examples of what different filter styles look like.



Under Sink Filter



Countertop Filter

Water Filtration Methods

POU water treatment systems use different filtration methods to reduce PFAS in household tap water. Many filter systems use Reverse Osmosis (RO), Granular Activated Carbon (GAC), or Ion Exchange (IX) treatment methods.

Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) or Ion Exchange (IX) Treatment Methods

- ◆ Uses a container called a “cartridge” that is filled with carbon pieces or ion exchange resin beads that PFAS and other contaminants stick to as water passes through.
- ◆ Allows water to flow quickly.
- ◆ Some filters that use GAC or ion exchange treatment methods are independently tested and certified by NSF to reduce PFOA and PFOS in drinking water.

Reverse Osmosis (RO) Filtration Method

- ◆ Uses a layer of material called a “membrane” that has very small holes to strain PFAS and other contaminants out of water as it flows through.
- ◆ Can make water flow slower.
- ◆ Can sometimes need a second filter called a “pre-filter” to clean out small particles like silt or dirt.

Pros and Cons: GAC, IX and RO

GAC and IX Pros and Cons	RO Pros and Cons
GAC is usually less expensive to purchase, IX is usually more expensive.	Usually more expensive to purchase.
Requires cartridge to be replaced more often. Follow manufacturer directions for replacement.	Does not require membrane to be replaced often. Follow manufacturer directions for membrane and pre-filter replacement.
Some GAC and IX units come with an indicator light, but most do NOT alert you when the cartridge needs to be replaced. Bacteria can also grow on the filter if it is not replaced regularly. Follow manufacturer directions for replacement.	Water slows down or stops flowing when membrane needs to be replaced.
High levels of other contaminants in your water can use up the filter and stop it from removing PFAS before the manufacturer recommends you replace it.	High levels of other contaminants in your water may clog the filter before the manufacturer recommends you replace it.
Does not waste water.	On average, 4 gallons of water are sent down the drain to get 1 gallon of filtered water.
PFAS are thrown out with cartridge when it is replaced. If filter is not replaced on a regular schedule, it can stop working or increase the amount of PFAS contamination in your drinking water.	PFAS are sent down the drain either to municipal sewer or to your septic tank.
Some GAC and IX filters are NSF certified for PFOA/PFOS reduction. See back page for more information on NSF Certified Filters.	Some RO filters are NSF certified for PFOA/PFOS reduction. See back page for more information on NSF certified filters.
Works well with low water pressure.	Needs enough water pressure to work. Check manufacturer guidelines.
Removes many types of PFAS from drinking water.	Better at removing all PFAS from drinking water.

Not all water filters reduce PFAS.

- ◆ First, check the product packaging for certification to “NSF/ANSI 53” or NSF/ANSI 58” for PFAS reduction or PFOA and PFOS reduction.
- ◆ If in doubt, check to see if the filter is listed as certified at the certification body’s website (below).
- ◆ If still in doubt, you can contact the certification body directly from their websites

There are currently five American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-accredited third-party certification bodies that evaluate drinking water filters for PFAS reduction capabilities. Each has a registered trademark that is used on certified products. Links to these certification bodies are provided below.

CSA Group <https://www.csagroup.org/testing-certification/product-listing/>

IAPMO R&T, Inc. <https://pld.iapmo.org/>

NSF <https://info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/>

UL <https://productiq.ulprospector.com/en>

WQA <https://find.wqa.org/find-products#/>

Make sure the filter you choose is certified to NSF/ANSI standards by a third party like NSF or the Water Quality Association.

It's important to note that the current certification standards for PFAS filters (as of June 2024) do not yet indicate that a filter will remove PFAS down to the levels EPA has now set for a drinking water standard. EPA is working with standard-setting bodies to update their filter certifications to match EPA’s new requirements. In the meantime, remember that reducing levels of PFAS in your water is an effective way to limit your exposure. To make sure the filter you select has been independently confirmed (certified) to remove PFAS:

Filter Cartridge Disposal—Check with your local health department or solid waste utility about disposing of used cartridges in your household trash. Some counties have a special collection site for household trash for paints, solvents and other potentially harmful chemicals.

For more information on PFAS health effects, water testing and treatment, and other PFAS activities in Washington State, visit doh.wa.gov/pfas