

Common Questions about Chromium-6 in Wisconsin Drinking Water

Safe drinking water is important to everyone. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued guidance for water testing to help identify levels and sources of chromium 6, which is a form of the metallic element chromium and which is now under rigorous study by EPA to determine if there are potential health impacts.

This year, EPA is expected to conclude its multi-year process to determine whether a maximum level of chromium 6 needs to be set for drinking water to protect public health and if so, what that maximum level should be.

When we have more information about the causes and levels of chromium 6, the DNR will identify actions to be taken. Today, no drinking water alternative, be it bottled water, filtering, or some other treatment, can be recommended as being safer from chromium than drinking tap water.

What is chromium-6?

- A form of the metallic element chromium.
- One of the three most common forms of chromium in the environment

Where does it come from?

- Chromium can be present in rocks, soil, plants and animals.
- Chromium is used in steel making, leather tanning, paints, dyes, and wood preservatives.
- Chromium-6 can be formed by a chemical reaction with other forms of chromium

Is there a drinking water standard set to protect public health?

- There is no specific standard for chromium-6 but there is a drinking standard of 100 parts per billion for all forms of chromium. That standard was established in 1991 by EPA.

Are water systems monitoring for chromium-6?

- There are no specific monitoring requirements for chromium-6, however, Madison and Milwaukee have begun such testing.
- Community water systems such as those serving towns, cities, apartment complexes, mobile home parks are monitoring for total chromium and the DNR reviews those results to ensure levels are below that health-based standard.
- Waters systems known as "non-transient non-community water systems," which serve industries, schools, and businesses, also monitoring for total chromium.
- How frequently water systems check chromium levels depends on the system type and the level of chromium detected in earlier samples.

What is DNR doing?

- DNR is awaiting results of a national review of the chromium standard currently underway at U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- DNR is working with water systems that have questions on chromium-6 to make sure they are aware of the current information and national guidance.
- DNR is working with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to develop a coordinated response to chromium-6 questions.

What is EPA doing?

- EPA is currently conducting peer review of new health data related to chromium-6
- EPA has provided guidance for water systems interested in conducting monitoring for chromium-6
- EPA will be evaluating the need to establish a new standard.

Where can I get more information?

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's web site: <http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/chromium/guidance.cfm>

What can people do to learn more locally?

- They can contact their local water utility to discuss their concerns and what steps the utility may be taking.

Should consumers use bottled water?

- Switching from a public water system to bottled water does not guarantee improved water quality.
- Bottled water is not subject to as stringent as monitoring requirements as your public water system.
- There are no monitoring requirements for chromium-6 in bottled water.

Can consumers install home treatment units?

- Without knowing the site specific details on the source of chromium-6 we cannot recommend a specific home treatment device.
- Installing home treatment does not guarantee improved water quality. Treatment devices need to be properly designed, installed, maintained, and water samples analyzed to ensure the chromium is being removed.

Where can I get a sample analyzed?

- Drinking water laboratories certified to conduct Safe Drinking Water Analysis and that are able to follow USEPA recent guidance on analytical techniques can conduct analysis.
- There is not a current list of these laboratories because the current techniques for analyzing for total chromium are not sensitive enough to accurately document the low levels of chromium-6 that are being found.



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