Grand Haven Area Public Schools

What You Need to Know About PFAS

Here at Grand Haven Area Public Schools (GHAPS), our student's wellbeing, including quality drinking water, is our number one priority. You may have heard that the water at Robinson Elementary School was tested for a group of chemicals called per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Some of these chemicals were found at amounts above the Environmental Health Protection Agency (EPA) lifetime health advisory (LHA) level. We are taking every step to ensure our students wellbeing – and part of that is keeping our parents and community informed. Below you'll find some basic information about what happened, what's next and where you can find more information.

What happened?

On Monday, October 29th, 2018, GHAPS was notified by The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) that Robinson Elementary School's water supply found perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), two of the PFAS tested, at amounts higher than the EPA LHA level. Initial test results found combined PFOS and PFOA levels of 110 parts per trillion (ppt) which is above the EPA LHA of 70 ppt. Total PFAS levels for the school were found at 144 ppt.

All other schools in the district have been tested and no levels of PFAS have been detected.

How did the district respond?

School officials were immediately notified by MDEQ and immediately provided bottled water to all students and staff in the building. The school district continues to work with the MDEQ, as well as other local, county and state agencies to determine next steps.

What are PFAS, and why are they of concern?

PFAS are part of a group of chemicals used globally during the past century in manufacturing, firefighting and thousands of common household and other consumer products. Although more research is needed, some studies in people have shown that certain PFAS may:

- Lowering a woman's chance of getting pregnant
- Increasing the chance of high blood pressure in pregnant women
- Increasing the chance of thyroid disease
- Increasing cholesterol levels
- Changing immune response
- Increasing chance of cancer, especially kidney and testicular cancers

What's next?

The MDEQ took additional samples on Monday, and results are expected this week. From there, GHAPS will work with the MDEQ and other agencies to determine next steps. In the meantime, all students and staff at Robinson Elementary will be provided bottled water for drinking and cooking.

Why was the school tested?

In recent years, experts have become increasingly concerned by the potential effects of high amounts of PFAS on human health. Although there is more to learn about PFAS and human health, the State of Michigan takes this issue seriously and is one of the first states in the nation to initiate a statewide testing effort to identify where PFAS is in our state, as well as establish a cleanup standard for PFAS in groundwater used for drinking water.

As part of this effort, MDEQ has begun a statewide initiative to test drinking water from all schools that use well water and community water supplies for PFAS. PFAS is not something that is required in Michigan or national water testing. MDEQ is taking this proactive, precautionary step of testing these drinking water sources to determine if public health actions are needed and to quickly respond as elevated results are detected. Robinson Elementary School PFAS results were identified as part of that state-wide proactive efforts.

How can I get my water tested?

Visit miOttawa.org/PFAS for more information, or call the MDEQ Environmental Assistance Center at 1-800-662-9278 to ask if your well is one that might be tested.

What about skin contact with water, such as washing your hands?

Drinking is the primary way PFAS can get into the body. Washing hands and other skin contact is not considered a health concern, as PFAS does not move easily through skin.

Where can I get more information?

- Up-to-date information on next steps and resources: <u>miOttawa.org/PFAS</u>
- State of Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) website: <u>www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse</u>
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) website: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) website: <u>www.epa.gov/pfas</u>
- PFAS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Factsheet: <u>https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/docs/pfas_fact_sheet.pdf</u>
- Talking to Your Doctor Factsheet: <u>https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfc/docs/Talking_to_Doctor.pdf</u>