



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

ROBERT GORDON
DIRECTOR

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CONTACT: Lynn Sutfin
517-241-2112
SutfinL1@michigan.gov

MDHHS reminds Michiganders to avoid foam on lakes and rivers with high levels of PFAS

LANSING, Mich. – With the summer recreation season here, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is issuing a reminder that everyone should avoid foam on Michigan lakes and rivers known to have per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the water.

Foam on these water bodies can have much higher amounts of PFAS than the water, and swallowing foam with PFAS could be a health risk. Health advisories for foam exist on some waterbodies and specific advisories can be found in the [PFAS Foam](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse) section at [Michigan.gov/pfasresponse](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse).

“Although, current science indicates PFAS does not move easily through the skin, it’s best to rinse off foam after contact and bathe or shower after the day’s outdoor activities,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health. “None of this information changes recommendations for water use at home.”

An MDHHS evaluation of how young children might recreate on lakes and rivers shows a health risk could exist from repeated, prolonged whole-body contact with foam containing high amounts of PFAS. Repeated prolonged contact is considered to be three hours per day, five days per week, over three months of a year, representing a summer season. MDHHS’ recommendation to avoid foam with PFAS is protective of everyone, including young children.

Swimming or bathing in water containing PFAS is not a health concern because the amount of PFAS is typically low compared to the foam. Although swallowing PFAS is the main way to get it in your body, an accidental swallow of river or lake water is not a health concern.

The amount of PFAS in lake and river water and in foam matters in determining if a health concern exists. MDHHS will continue to evaluate surface water and foam data as it becomes available and will issue further recommendations if necessary.

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Additionally, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development recommends that people not allow their animals – especially dogs – to come into contact with or swallow the foam. Dogs and other animals can potentially swallow foam collected in their fur when grooming themselves and should be thoroughly rinsed off with fresh water after contact with foamy water.

Not all foam contains PFAS. There is naturally occurring foam that piles up in bays, eddies or river barriers such as dams. This foam is off-white and/or brown in color and may have an earthy or fish smell. Naturally occurring foam can have high amounts of bacteria and it is best to rinse off after contact with it as well.

PFAS foam:

- Can be bright white.
- Is usually lightweight.
- Can be sticky.
- Tends to pile up like shaving cream.
- Can blow onto the beach.

More information about PFAS and foam under the [PFAS Foam](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse) section at [Michigan.gov/pfasresponse](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse).

If you have health questions about PFAS or foam, call the MDHHS hotline at 800-648-6942.

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