

Chemicals in Well Water

Public Health Fact Sheet

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCL) in drinking water for many chemicals. Information about some of the chemicals that have been found in the ground water is below.

Chemical Name	What is it?	MCL (ppb*)	How can it affect health?
Carbon tetrachloride	It is a chemical that was used in the past as a refrigerant, a propellant in aerosol cans and as a cleaning fluid. It has a sweet odor.	5 ppb	Exposure to high levels can cause liver and kidney damage. High levels of exposure can also cause central nervous system effects such as nausea, vomiting, headaches, dizziness, sleepiness or death. In animals, exposure to carbon tetrachloride over many years increases the risk of liver and adrenal gland cancers. The EPA has determined that it is a probable human carcinogen.
Tetrachloroethylene or perchloroethylene (PCE)	It is a solvent often used in dry cleaning or degreasing metals. It is also used to make other chemicals. It has a sweet odor.	5 ppb	It is not known what health effects might happen after long-term exposure to low levels of tetrachloroethylene in food or water. In animals, exposure at high concentrations can damage the liver and kidney and cause liver and kidney cancers. It has been determined to be a probable human carcinogen. People who breathe in high levels of tetrachloroethylene can experience nausea, difficulty in speaking or walking, confusion, sleepiness, dizziness, headaches, unconsciousness or death.
Trichloroethylene (TCE)	It is a solvent often used to degrease metals and to make other chemicals. It can also be found in household products like paint removers and typewriter correction fluid.	5 ppb	High doses of trichloroethylene increase the risk of liver and lung cancers in animals. It has been determined to be a probable human carcinogen although there is no clear evidence it causes cancer in humans. Breathing or drinking large amounts can cause impaired heart function, headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, unconsciousness or death.

*parts per billion

For more information, go to:

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)

www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxpro2.html

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

www.epa.gov