

# PFAS explained factsheet



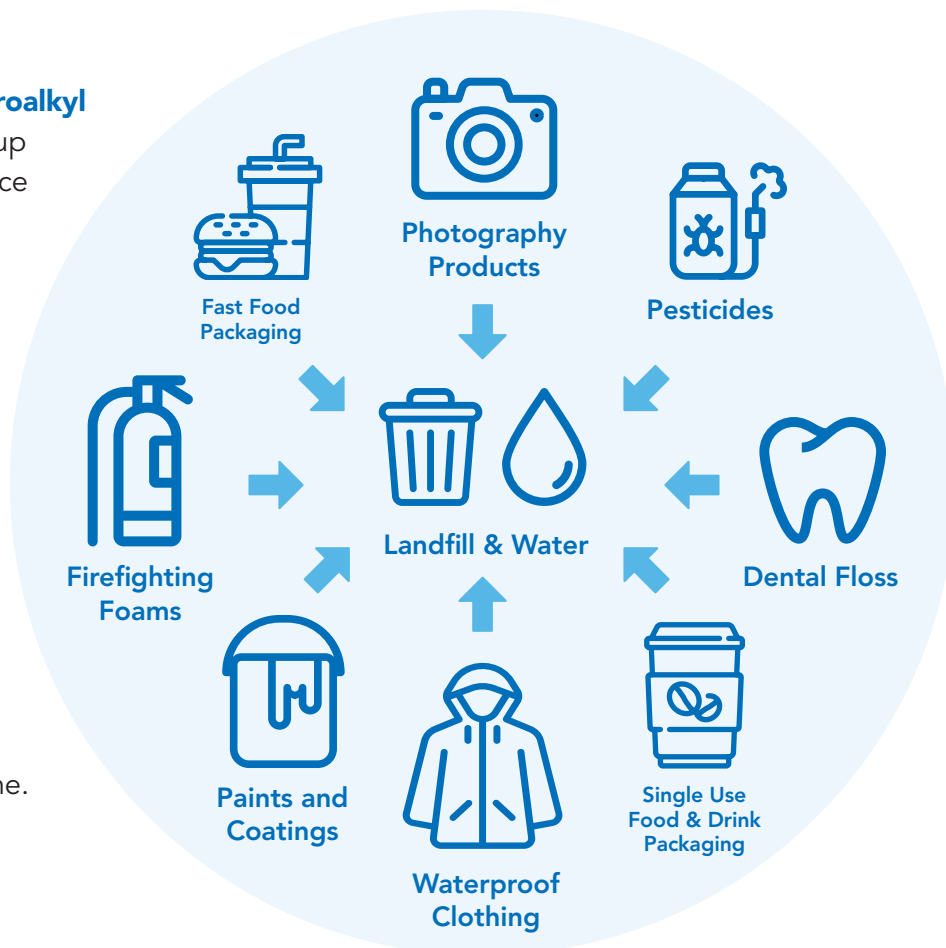
Scottish Water  
Trusted to serve Scotland

## What are PFAS?

PFAS stands for **Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances**. These are a large group of man-made compounds used since the 1940s in things like:

- Stain repellents (for carpets and clothes)
- Non-stick cookware
- Firefighting foams
- Food packaging
- Waterproof clothing
- Cosmetics and more

PFAS are known as “forever chemicals” because they don’t break down easily and can stay in the environment for a very long time.



## Where PFAS comes from

All PFAS are synthetic, and they do not occur in nature. They’re released into the environment from:

- Factories (like those making textiles, aviation products, or electronics)
- Everyday products (food packaging, waterproof clothing, cosmetics)
- Landfills and drains (when products are thrown away or washed)

Once in the environment, PFAS can make their way into rivers and reservoirs, and may eventually make it into our drinking water.

## Why we care about PFAS

PFAS can build up in our bodies over time (this is called “bioaccumulation”). If you’re exposed to high levels, there may be health risks for people of all ages. That’s why it’s important to keep PFAS levels as low as possible. We follow the latest scientific advice and work closely with UK Public Health Authorities to protect you and your family.

At Scottish Water we work hard to make sure we deliver clean, safe drinking water to you every day.

## Where we sample for PFAS

We regularly test water to meet strict drinking water standards set by our regulator at:

- Water sources such as rivers and reservoirs
- Treatment works (where water is cleaned for drinking water)
- Drinking water network



### Units of Measurement

PFAS in water are measured in **micrograms per litre (µg/L)**. This is a very small amount – the equivalent of a drop of water in an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Even at these low levels, we keep a close eye on things to make sure your water is safe.

## PFAS in drinking water

We must meet strict guidelines outlined in **The Public Water Supplies (Scotland) Regulations 2014**, on the level of PFAS in drinking water throughout the network:

- The maximum allowed in drinking water is 0.1 µg/L (micrograms per litre)
- The **Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR)** checks for 20 different PFAS compounds
- We go further, testing a much broader range of PFAS compounds

In the unlikely event of levels being too high, we would act quickly to ensure water is safe to drink. We would work closely with:

- NHS Health Boards
- UK Public Health Authorities
- Environmental Health Officers and SEPA Environment Protection Teams
- Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR)

These partners would assess the situation and provide expert advice.

We would take immediate action to reduce levels and communicate clearly with any affected customers.

## Keeping up to date and getting in touch

Find out more about Scottish Water, our services, and keep up to date with what we are doing in your area:

 [Customer.scottishwater.co.uk/ReportAProblem](https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/ReportAProblem)

 0800 0778 778 (free 24/7)\*

 [Facebook.com/scottishwater](https://www.facebook.com/scottishwater)

 @scottish\_water

 [www.scottishwater.co.uk](https://www.scottishwater.co.uk)

### We're here for you

For customers with medical, disability, caring, or communications needs, our free Priority Services Register offers extra support during water disruptions.

**Sign up today**

[www.scottishwater.co.uk/Priority](https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/Priority)

\* We record all calls for quality and training purposes.