Frequently Asked Questions

Why is it that some chemicals don't have standards?

Not all chemicals tested have a standard. This may be because the process for setting a standard takes a long time. Or, it might be that the safe level is not yet known. We think it is important to test these chemicals to generate new information, and there may be a standard in the future.

What do the footnotes mean?

Some groups of chemicals did not have an exact match to a standard. Therefore, we report standards that approximate a safe level for the group.

Can I share these measurements on social media?

These results are your private information. You can share them if you like, but they should be treated like personal information, and please consider the implications of sharing them before doing so.

Why did this report take so long?

The water samples were analyzed for many different chemicals using several different testing methods in a university setting. These tests are complicated and take a long time to carry out.

Where were these samples measured?

The water samples were analyzed for research purposes at Yale University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and not a state-certified water testing laboratory.

What if my water has a high ("orange-colored") value for a chemical with a health-based standard?

Some water samples may have had levels of a chemical greater than what is considered safe. In this case, a first step would be to have your water retested, because there are many factors that influence chemical levels in drinking water, and levels can fluctuate over time. If you have concerns about your drinking water, we recommend water testing by a state-certified water testing laboratory.

What if my water has high (orange) levels of sodium?

Sodium may be naturally occurring in the drinking water. It may also be present from other sources, such as road salts. Water softeners use sodium to reduce the mineral content of the drinking water. Therefore, homes with water softeners may have elevated levels of sodium. These levels may exceed the standards for taste. However, these are not health-based standards.

What if my water has high (orange) levels of manganese and/or iron?

These chemicals are often picked up by water flowing through rocks containing iron and manganese. These metals could also occur from other activities, such as mining. Manganese and iron commonly occur together. The standards for these chemicals are due to the color, odor, or taste of the water; also they can cause staining of fabric washed in the water. These are not health-based standards.

What if my water has high (orange) levels of arsenic or barium?

Some water samples may have had levels of arsenic or barium greater than what is considered safe. Chemicals like arsenic and barium can enter the water supply from natural deposits from rocks and soil or from industrial and agricultural pollution. In this case, a first step would be to have your water retested, because levels can fluctuate over time. If you have concerns about your drinking water, we recommend water testing by a state-certified water testing laboratory.