

## POTENTIAL EXPOSURE TO CONTAMINATED WATER

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*Jointly prepared by public health experts from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps  
and the Hawai'i Department of Health*

As of 4 December 2021, preliminary water testing has revealed the possible presence of a petroleum-based substance in the water supply of some housing areas. Here's what you need to know.

### Short term health effects

- Many factors determine whether a person can be harmed by petroleum products, including the dose (how much), the duration (for how long), the route of exposure, and the state of health of the individual.
- Routes of exposure:
  - Ingestion (through drinking, cooking, and oral hygiene)
  - Skin exposure (bathing, oral hygiene)
  - Inhalation (through vapors/air borne particles)
- Symptoms of recent exposure:
  - Irritated skin
  - Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
  - Headache
  - Dizziness, confusion, low energy
- The symptoms listed above have multiple potential causes aside from contaminated water.
- To be safe, if you experience the symptoms above after exposure to potentially contaminated water, take the following actions:
  - Eliminate all exposures to the water source (including ice and small appliances).
  - Increase fresh air and rest until symptoms subside.
  - Wash exposed skin with clean water and soap.
  - Use over the counter medications to treat headache, stomach upset, and skin irritation if desired.
- Seek immediate medical attention for difficulty breathing, confusion, disorientation, behavior changes, severe nausea and vomiting, or other serious conditions.

### Long term health effects

Long term effects to health from exposure to petroleum-contaminated drinking water are not clear. Most of the available information on long term health effects of petroleum-based products involve exposure to undiluted or highly concentrated petroleum products, or prolonged or repeated exposures to these products.

### Pregnancy

Very little information exists about exposure to petroleum products during pregnancy. Pregnant women with symptoms of recent exposure as noted above should contact their obstetric provider.

Nearly all body systems are completely formed early in pregnancy. The placenta is an excellent filter and is designed to protect the baby. Some chemicals do cross the placenta and can affect the baby's growth and development. If you are concerned about potential impact on your unborn child, please contact your obstetric provider.

## Home Recommendations

- If fuel odors are present or water is visibly contaminated, DO NOT USE tap water for any purpose due to the potential risks from ingestion, skin, and inhalational exposures.
- Refrain from drinking water or using ice from the refrigerator, cooking, or conducting oral hygiene activities (tooth brushing), throughout the affected military housing areas.
- **If no fuel odor is detected**, doing laundry, dishwashing, hand washing and bathing (short showers preferred) are OK. These activities are deemed low risk to cause skin irritation.
- Toilets may be flushed. Please close the lid first to prevent any possible contaminants being put into the air.
- If a fuel odor is detected, open windows and use fans to move air throughout the home for 10-15 minutes, or until the smell dissipates.
- There is no concern about using air conditioning, which is a closed system.

## Resources

The Military Health System will document exposure symptoms of patients in their medical record. Please contact your primary care provider for additional information, as well as for any remaining concerns.

If symptoms persist or worsen, contact the individual's primary care provider or consult with the following telephone resources:

- Military Health System H2O hotline at 808-433-8102, available daily from 0730-1600
- TRICARE Nurse Advice Line at 800-874-2273, available 24/7
- Hawaii Poison Center 800-222-1222, available 24/7

Additional information is available at the following online resources:

- Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet Joint Base Pearl Harbor Water Updates  
<https://www.cpf.navy.mil/JPBPHH-Water-Updates>
- Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam Facebook page  
<https://www.facebook.com/JPBPHH>
- Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam website  
<https://www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnrh/om/joint-base-pearl-harbor-hickam-water-resources-and-updates.html>
- US Army Garrison Hawaii and Task Force Ohana website  
<https://home.army.mil/hawaii/index.php/water>
- US Army Garrison Hawaii Facebook page  
<https://www.facebook.com/usaghawaii>
- Hawai'i Department of Health  
<https://health.hawaii.gov/about/navy-water-system-quality-updates/>