PFAS and Foam

Foam forms on many of Michigan's 11,000 rivers, lakes and streams. It can contain harmful bacteria or chemicals, such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). If a body of water has PFAS in it, its foam can also have PFAS in it. In rare cases, human-made foam, such as firefighting foam, can also be released into a body of water.

Many PFAS don't break down easily and can stay in the environment for a long time. If we swallow those PFAS, they likely stay in our bodies for a long time and lead to potential health effects.

To protect your health, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recommends avoiding all foam on Michigan lakes, rivers, streams and other surface waters.

Foam:

- Can be white, off-white or brown.
- Is usually lightweight.
- May have an earthy or fishy smell.
- Often piles up in bays, eddies, dams and other river barriers.
- Can be sticky.
- May blow inland.
- May contain harmful bacteria, algae or chemicals, such as PFAS.

Don't touch or swallow foam.

If you do touch foam:

- Rinse it off as soon as possible and bathe or shower after swimming.
- Be sure to wash your hands before preparing food, eating or putting your hands in your mouth.
- Don't swallow it.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) recommends people keep their pets from touching or swallowing foam on bodies of water.

- Animals can swallow foam that has built up on their fur when grooming themselves.
- If animals touch foam, they should be rinsed off and bathed with fresh water.
- Pet owners with questions related to animals and foam should contact their veterinarian.

For More Information:

- **Visit Michigan.gov/PFAS.**
- **Visit the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team webpage on PFAS foam on lakes and streams: Eh.Michigan.gov/PFASFoamFAQ.**
- **Call the MDHHS Environmental Health hotline at 800-648-6942.**

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