

TRIHALOMETHANE FACT SHEET

A recent California study suggests a link between miscarriages and disinfection by-products in drinking water called trihalomethanes (THMs). This is a fact sheet that may answer some of your questions about THMs.

What are trihalomethanes (THMs)?

- THMs and other disinfection by-products are formed when disinfectants such as chlorine -- used to control disease-causing contaminants in drinking water -- react with naturally occurring organic matter in the source water. The primary trihalomethanes of concern are:

Chloroform
Dibromochloromethane
Bromodichloromethane
Bromoform

Why are THMs in the drinking water?

- THMs are the result of disinfecting water, which is essential for protecting consumers from life-threatening diseases. The health risks for THMs are extremely small compared to the risks associated with inadequate disinfection. It is important, therefore, that disinfection not be compromised in an attempt to decrease such by-products.

Are THMs monitored or regulated?

- Yes. The EPA currently regulates trihalomethanes by imposing a maximum allowable level in drinking water of 100 parts-per-billion on the average. To reduce potential exposure, the EPA has proposed to lower that level in the future to an average of 80 parts-per-billion.

What about pregnant women, should they be concerned?

- Women in the early stage of pregnancy may wish to consult their physicians for advice. However, health officials who reviewed the THM study agreed that in general they would NOT advise someone in early pregnancy to stop drinking water from public supplies.

TRIHALOMETHANE FACT SHEET

How can THM exposure be minimized?

- THM levels in tap water can be minimized by boiling it for one full minute and letting it cool before drinking or by using a home water treatment device that is officially certified by NSF International as effective to remove THMs.

Can THMs be in bottled water and home filtered water?

- Yes. THMs may be present in some bottled and home filtered water. To find out if THMs are in your bottled water or home filtered water, check on the label or call the manufacturer. Consumers can also test their own water for THMs by consulting a pre-approved, authorized laboratory in their state. For a listing of these laboratories call the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

Where can you get more information?

You may call the EPA Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791) which is available to answer questions on disinfection by-products, trihalomethanes, and many other drinking water subjects. The hotline operates 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. Additionally, the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water at EPA maintains a website with useful information on drinking water. The address is <http://www.epa.gov/OGWDW/>.