



Voluntary Blood Testing Program for PFAS

PROGRAM INFORMATION FOR GPs

From 30 November 2016, the Australian Government will provide a free blood test for Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) to people who live or work, or have lived or worked, in the Williamtown, NSW and Oakey, QLD, Investigation Areas.

The Voluntary Blood Testing Program will run concurrently with an epidemiological study and free blood testing will be available to eligible individuals until 31 March 2018.

Where individual consent is given, the PFAS blood test results from these areas may be used as part of an epidemiological study to improve the understanding of potential health effects relating to PFAS exposure. Please refer to the factsheet *Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS): an epidemiological study* for more information on the epidemiological study.

The Australian Government has commissioned the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH) at the Australian National University (ANU) to examine the potential health effects resulting from PFAS exposure in the affected communities of Williamtown, NSW, and Oakey, QLD, through an epidemiological study.

Both the Voluntary Blood Testing Program and the epidemiological study are available on an opt-in basis and people who decide to have a blood test under this program are not obliged to participate in the epidemiological study.

The Australian Government will not be provided with the personal details of anyone seeking a blood test under this program.

While the Voluntary Blood Testing Program was being developed, the Department of Defence established interim arrangements to reimburse individuals in the Williamtown, NSW and Oakey, QLD, Investigation Areas who have already obtained blood tests. These interim arrangements will cease following the commencement of the Voluntary Blood Testing Program.

The following information will assist you if a person presents to your practice wishing to obtain a free PFAS blood test.

Eligibility for testing

Eligibility for testing under this program should be discussed with those seeking a blood test in the context of possible exposure pathways. For further information on exposure pathways and information to discuss with individuals seeking a blood test please refer to the factsheets *Voluntary Blood Testing Program for PFAS – Advice on PFAS for GPs* and *Pre-test consultation advice for GPs*.

People eligible for a single free blood test under this program include those who:

- currently live or work in the Williamtown, NSW and Oakey, QLD, Investigation Areas.

OR

- have previously lived or worked in the Investigation Areas of Williamtown and Oakey but now live elsewhere.

Statutory Declaration

A Statutory Declaration will be required from the individual seeking a blood test, or the parent or guardian of a minor, to confirm they are eligible for a free blood test under this program.

People seeking blood tests should print and sign the pre-filled Statutory Declaration on the Department of Health website before presenting at your practice. The Department of Health will also supply your practice with pre-filled Statutory Declaration forms to be used by patients who do not bring the form.

Requesting a PFAS blood test

Sonic Healthcare has been engaged by the Australian Government to conduct the blood testing for the Voluntary Blood Testing Program. Sonic Healthcare will provide your practice with specially marked PFAS request forms that are pre-filled with the PFAS testing and billing requirements. This form should be provided to eligible people seeking a blood test under the Voluntary Blood Testing Program. For additional PFAS request forms please email commercial.path@sonichealthcare.com or call 02 9855 5437.

All blood tests under the Voluntary Blood Testing Program must be done by Sonic Healthcare. The Australian Government will not reimburse the costs of blood tests performed by other pathology providers.

The specially marked request forms will include a section for the individual to consent to their blood sample and result being transferred to the ANU to be included in the epidemiological study and to consent to the study team contacting them in the future.

Patients must take their completed Statutory Declaration and specially marked PFAS request forms to a Sonic Healthcare Pathology Collection Centre. Sonic Healthcare will use the Statutory Declaration as evidence to bill the Australian Government for the cost of the test.

Can people not eligible for the Voluntary Blood Testing Program get a blood test for PFAS?

Individuals not eligible for PFAS blood testing under this program or not willing to sign the Statutory Declaration form can be referred for a blood test but at their own cost.

In this instance, a standard pathology request form should be issued and the pathology provider will bill the patient directly. The private testing fee is approximately \$500 plus GST and is not covered by Medicare.

Patients should also be advised on the diagnostic and prognostic value of the blood test — see factsheet *Advice on PFAS for GPs*.

Can a person who has already had a blood test, either privately or through the interim Department of Defence arrangement, get a blood test under the Voluntary Blood Testing Program?

Yes, however:

- repeat blood testing for PFAS is not recommended and has no clinical value. In humans, studies suggest that it can take many years for PFAS blood levels to go down by half; and
- if the individual wants to get another blood test, and is otherwise eligible for the Voluntary Blood Testing Program, then it is recommended that it is done in the context of the epidemiology study being conducted by the ANU.

Please refer to the factsheet *Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS): an epidemiological study* for more information on the Epidemiological Study.

Australian Defence Force personnel

Full-time Australian Defence Force personnel (including Reserves rendering continuous full-time service) should seek testing through their usual Defence garrison health facility.

If eligible, families of Australian Defence Force personnel can access testing through the Voluntary Blood Testing Program for PFAS.

Cost of testing and consultation

The laboratory test for PFAS is free for those eligible for a blood test under the Voluntary Blood Testing Program for PFAS.

Under the Voluntary Blood Testing Program, a free blood test and two free general practice consultations are available to eligible people — one prior to the blood test, and one following the blood test. This will ensure that they are adequately informed of the limitations of the blood test and have their follow up questions addressed.

Practitioners from anywhere in Australia who provide eligible consultations, should bill consultations to:

- Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network for people who currently live or work, or have previously lived or worked, in the Williamstown, NSW, Investigation Area; and
- Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network for people who currently live or work, or have previously lived or worked, in the Oakey, QLD, Investigation Area.

Please see the Hunter, New England & Central Coast PHN website or the Darling Downs West Moreton Primary Health Network website for further details.

Any other consultations in relation to possible PFAS-related health issues, including with individuals not eligible for a free blood test under the Voluntary Blood Testing Program, or further consultations regarding blood test results should follow your practice's normal fee arrangements.

Management of PFAS test results

Under the Voluntary Blood Testing Program, individual blood tests results will be reported to the requesting GP within seven days through the practice's usual channel for receiving pathology results. It is recommended that an individual's blood test result be discussed with them in person so that an appropriate explanation of the results can be provided; including the limitations of PFAS blood testing in individuals. Those tested may also be referred to mental health and support services if required.

For further information on interpreting PFAS blood test results please refer to the factsheet *Post-test consultation advice for GPs*.

As mentioned above, the results will also be provided to the ANU for inclusion in the epidemiological study where consent for that process has been provided.

Investigation Areas

Williamstown, NSW

Click [here](#) to view the current Investigation Area map.

Further information about the Williamstown Investigation Area, including recommendations for how affected residents can minimise PFAS exposure in the future is available:

- in the Department of Defence's Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) Fact Sheet; and
- on the NSW Environmental Protection Agency website.

Oakey, QLD

Click [here](#) to view the current Investigation Area map.

Further information about the Oakey Investigation Area, how to interpret the map and recommendations for how affected residents can minimise PFAS exposure in the future is available:

- in the Department of Defence's Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) Fact Sheet; and
- on the QLD Government website.

Further information

The Department of Health

For further information regarding the Australia Government Department of Health's response to PFAS contamination, including health advice published by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and its subcommittee enHealth, please go to the Department of Health website.

The Department of Defence

For further information regarding to the Department of Defence's response to PFAS contamination and site specific information please go the Department of Defence website.