

Questions And Answers Related to Haloacetic Acids (HAA5) In Your Drinking Water

What are Haloacetic Acids (HAA5)?

Haloacetic acids five (HAA5) refer to the five haloacetic acids most commonly found in drinking water. HAA5 consists of monochloroacetic acid, dichloroacetic acid (DCA), trichloroacetic acid (TCA), monobromoacetic acid, and dibromoacetic acid. HAA5 are more likely to be found at higher levels in water supplies with surface water sources such as rivers or reservoirs since soil and rock act as filters to reduce organic matter found in groundwater. They are formed as disinfection by-products (DBPs) when chlorine is added to kill bacteria and other pathogenic microorganisms. HAA5 react with naturally occurring organic matter in water to produce DBPs. Reducing DBPs in water systems involves balancing the benefits of preventing acute disease outbreaks against the health risks from long-term DBP exposure.

What are the health risks of HAA5 in drinking water?

Based upon the EPA warning, increased risk comes with consuming water with HAA5's over the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for many years. However, if you have particular health concerns or have other pre-existing health issues, it is recommended you discuss this notice with your health care professional. Some studies suggest that people who ingested chlorinated drinking water containing DBPs for long periods of time have an increased risk for cancer.

Is the water safe to drink? Why am I getting this notice?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires a water system provide this mandatory notice when a water standard is not met. As a customer and consumer of a product you have a right to know what is in the water you are consuming. Receiving this notice is not unlike reading the mandatory ingredient labels, nutritional information, and warning labels that are placed on all food products purchased in the United States.

The notice I received states that this violation happened several months ago, why am I just now being informed of this?

Testing for Haloacetic Acids requires determining a concentration of the substance in micrograms per liter (parts per billion). This type of testing requires a much longer period before results are determined which can be from two to four weeks. Once a violation is confirmed by the EPD, a violation notice must be issued. However, please note that the notice is provided to our customers within the thirty-day notice period required by the EPD.

I have had symptoms consistent with food poisoning. Did drinking my water cause this?

No. Haloacetic Acids do not cause food poisoning or create immediate sickness. Food poisoning is caused by bacteria, such as E. coli or fecal coliform ingested from a variety of sources. Any sickness from Haloacetic Acids would be created through excessive exposure over a long period of time.

What is HCWA doing to reduce HAA5's and prevent this from happening again?

HCWA is dedicated to providing safe and clean drinking water to its customers. To combat the formation of HAA5's in our system for our affected areas we have implemented a flushing program where we are flushing once a week to bring fresh water into the area. We are also using a method of "turning over" our tanks, which is where we allow a tank to get close to empty before filling back up. The longer water sits in pipes or tanks the more time chlorine has to react with the organic matter that is naturally occurring in water to create DBPs. This is why areas of low usage for our distribution system are more susceptible to DBPs like HAA5s forming.