

Tetrachloroethylene (PCE)

Quick Facts

- Tetrachloroethylene is known by many names. Common names include tetrachloroethene, perchloroethylene, perc, and PCE.
- Breathing PCE vapors in homes and buildings from contaminated soil or groundwater beneath them is one way that people could be exposed to PCE.

What is PCE?

- PCE is a chemical used in dry cleaning and for metal degreasing.
- It is also found in some products including some adhesives, automotive parts cleaners, and stain removers.



How could I be exposed to PCE?

- Breathing PCE vapors in homes and buildings from contaminated soil or groundwater beneath them. PCE vapors found underneath or near a building can enter the air of a building and reach harmful levels.
- Breathing fumes from clothes that have been dry cleaned using PCE.
- Living or working in a home or building where PCE is entering the indoor air from a nearby spill.

How can PCE affect my health?

- At low levels over a long time, PCE may cause color vision loss and changes in mood, memory, attention, and reaction time.
- Exposure to PCE could lead to higher risk of getting certain types of cancer and a higher risk of birth defects.
- Not everyone will get sick from breathing in PCE. Chemicals affect people in different ways. If you have health concerns, talk to your doctor. Mention your possible exposure to PCE.



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Is there a test to find out if someone has been exposed to PCE?

- It only takes a few days for your body to get rid of PCE.
- PCE and its breakdown products (metabolites) can be measured in blood and urine if the test is done before your body gets rid of the chemical.
- Even if PCE or its metabolites are found in blood and urine, it does not mean that health problems will happen. If you have one of the health problems listed on this factsheet, it doesn't mean you've been exposed to these chemicals.

How can families lower their risk of exposure to PCE?

- Use a clothing service that does not use PCE. You might try professional wet cleaning, carbon dioxide cleaning, or dry cleaners that use a different chemical.
- Follow instructions on product labels (especially metal degreasers/cleaners, adhesives, and stain removers).
- If PCE has been found at your home, follow advice from public health officials from your local health department or Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Want to know more?

To learn more about PCE in your community, contact:

For more information from MDHHS, call 1-800-648-6942.

Information in this fact sheet is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Tox FAQ's for Tetrachloroethylene and Toxicological Profile for Tetrachloroethylene

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