



CHROMIUM-6 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is hexavalent chromium or chromium-6?

Chromium is a naturally occurring metallic element found in the Earth's crust, including in rocks and sediments of the Coachella Valley. Trace amounts of this element appear in local groundwater due to the erosion of natural deposits.

THERE ARE TWO PRIMARY FORMS OF CHROMIUM:

1. Trivalent chromium (chromium-3) is the most common form of chromium. It is naturally occurring, non-toxic, and is an essential human nutrient. The rock, gravel, sand, and sediments that make up Coachella Valley's groundwater contain chromium-3.
2. Hexavalent chromium (chromium-6) is formed due to the weathering process that occurs over extended periods and natural chemical reactions, chromium-6 is naturally formed from chromium-3.

Is it safe to drink my tap water?

Yes, tap water can still be used for drinking, cooking, and all other needs. The state regulates chromium-6 for potential health impacts after many years (70+) of consumption, not for any immediate health risks.

The federal drinking water standard for total chromium is 100 parts per billion. The California drinking water standard for total chromium is 50 ppb, including chromium-3 and chromium-6. California's newly adopted 10 ppb Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) is the nation's only drinking water standard for chromium-6.

What has changed?

In 2014, California adopted a new drinking water regulation, the MCL, specific to chromium-6 that was lower than the total chromium limit, setting a limit of 10 ppb. In 2017, the Court invalidated the 2014 MCL for chromium-6, ruling that the economic analysis used to set the MCL was insufficient.

On April 17, 2024, after completing a new economic analysis, California again adopted the chromium-6 MCL at the initially proposed limit of 10 ppb. The MCL became effective on October 1, 2024.

Why did I get a notice about chromium-6?

The state requires CVWD to notify the public when the annual average of quarterly samples exceeds the chromium-6 MCL of 10 ppb. CVWD is also required to provide quarterly notices until all impacted drinking water wells comply with the adopted chromium-6 regulation.

How much chromium-6 is in our water?

The average level of naturally occurring chromium-6 in CVWD's wells is 9.4 ppb, with a range of 0 to 22 ppb. The new standard is 10 ppb. California's MCL is the nation's only drinking water standard for chromium-6.

Recent testing shows that about one-third (33 of 92) of the wells in CVWD's Cove system have chromium-6 levels above the state limit of 10 ppb.

What is CVWD doing to comply with the regulation?

Our mission is to provide safe, reliable drinking water for our customers and to meet the adopted MCL for chromium-6.

CVWD has completed a Compliance Plan and timeline, which were submitted to the California State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water (DDW) for review and approval. To meet state standards, 33 of 92 CVWD wells will either need to be taken out of service or treated to lower chromium-6 levels.

How much will it cost to comply with the new chromium-6 regulation?

The cost of complying with the new regulation will exceed \$350 million, significantly increasing water rates.

Are other water agencies impacted?

Yes. This drinking water MCL impacts 129 water systems, which will have to spend billions of dollars for treatment, undermining water affordability across California, which is the basis for the current lawsuit.

The chromium-6 MCL is again being challenged in court for inadequate economic analysis and alternatives, and for failing to consider its impact on California's Human Right to Water Policy.

For more information, visit our website at cvwd.org/Cr6. For questions, please contact our Water Quality Division at 760-398-2651, extension 2515, or by email at WQInquiries@cvwd.org.

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