

March 2026 Virtual Community Meeting – Top FAQs

Health Conditions

- **What health conditions have been researched as possibly associated with PBB exposure?**

PBB exposure has been associated with a variety of health outcomes, including a higher risk of certain cancers (breast, lymphoma, and gastrointestinal) as well as thyroid problems. Adult daughters born to exposed women had higher levels of miscarriages while the sons reported more urinary and genital conditions. Co-exposure of PBB with other environmental pollutants, such as DDT, PCB, and PFAS, can occur. We have studied PBB and PCB co-exposure in the past but have not found a combined effect between the two exposures.

Please see a recent review of the scientific literature:

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12161457/pdf/ehp15012.pdf>

Click [here](#) for a list of selected scientific publications, which include research on co-exposures and health conditions possibly associated with PBB exposure. Click [here](#) for an infographic summarizing our health findings and click [here](#) for a summary of PBB health findings.

- **Is there a connection between PBB exposure and autoimmune disorders and neurological disorders?**

We have looked at autoimmune disorders, including Grave's disease, and found evidence for a relationship between PBB and thyroid-related autoimmune disorders in women. Additionally, we found an association between PBB and neurologic autoimmune disorders (e.g. multiple sclerosis) among women. For men, we found an association with PBB and skin and joint autoimmune conditions which included psoriasis and lupus. Conversely, we have found a lower prevalence of psoriasis among women with higher PBB exposure.

- **Is there a connection between PBB exposure and fertility issues?**

In previous studies, we have not seen a relationship between PBB exposure and fertility issues overall, but we are currently conducting additional analyses. However, specifically the daughters of women with high PBB exposure had an

increased risk of miscarriage when they became pregnant as adults. We have also seen that daughters who were breast-fed by mothers with high PBB exposure were more likely to begin menstruation earlier.

- **Is there a connection between PBB exposure and respiratory or cardiovascular issues?**

We have not conducted studies in the Michigan PBB Registry exploring respiratory or cardiometabolic outcomes and PBB exposure. We are currently conducting analyses of PBB exposure and blood lipids and hypertension.

- **Is there a connection between PBB exposure and digestive issues?**

In a previous study, we found that among people directly exposed to PBB, those with a higher PBB level had an increased risk of digestive system cancers. We are currently updating the cancer risk data in the Michigan PBB Registry for further cancer studies.

- **Is there a connection between PBB exposure and mental health conditions?**

We are currently conducting analyses exploring mental health outcomes (e.g. anxiety and depression). A previous study found that daughters born to parents exposed to PBB had a higher proportion of ADHD, but overall, there was no association with PBB level. Further, no association between PBB exposure and autism has been observed.

The psychological impacts of the PBB disaster have been explored in the [Oral History Project](#).

- **What kinds of cancers are related to PBBs exposure (i.e. breast cancer, pancreatic cancer)?**

Higher risks of breast, lymphoma, and gastrointestinal cancers (which included liver, stomach, and esophagus) have been associated with PBB exposure. The research on pancreatic cancer is limited by a small number of reported cases. We have not found an association between PBB and urinary cancers (which included bladder and kidney). Associations with subtypes of breast cancer have not yet been explored. We are currently updating the cancer risk data in the Michigan PBB Registry for further cancer studies.

- **Are there any studies on inherited risk of health issues in children or grandchildren due to parental exposure to PBBs?**

PBB can be transferred from mother to child in the womb and through breast milk. However, those born after the contamination event in the 1970s have very low levels of PBB in their blood. Breastfeeding has several benefits that may outweigh the potential harms associated with very low levels of PBB. For more information about research findings related to transferring PBB from mother to child, please click [here](#).

We do frequently study the association of inherited PBB exposure and health conditions. We have found differences between health outcomes among the directly exposed (first-generation) and indirectly exposed (second and third generations). Click [here](#) to view our current research results, separated by exposure generation.

We encourage you to discuss the health outcomes associated with PBB with your children/grandchildren. Also, consider encouraging their involvement in the PBB registry and awareness of the PBB disaster.

- **Are there any studies looking at extreme weight loss and body burden of PBBs?**

To explore ways to reduce PBB levels, we recently completed a study examining whether weight loss, with and without the aid of a weight loss pill, a low-fat diet, and light exercise over six months, would speed up the elimination of PBB. We did not find any association between weight loss and an increased elimination of PBB, thus concluding that we do not have any reliable data on ways to reduce PBB levels.

We are currently seeking funding for a study exploring the ability of GLP-1 receptor agonist drugs (eg. Ozempic, Wegovy, etc.) to reduce body burden of PBB. If this study is funded, we will reach out regarding participation.

PBB Records and Registry Participation

- **How can I access my past record information?**

For requests of records, including those that may be on the storage media called microfiche, please see the page on our website [here](#) that details how to request PBB records.

If you would like to request your PBB records from the Michigan Long-Term PBB Study that were transferred to Emory, please complete the form [here](#).

We have developed a PBB Participant Portal where you will find your personal levels of PBB, PCB, and other chemicals measured since 2012 and the combined data for the entire cohort.

You will also be able to update your contact and health information, find forms to request or transfer records for you and your deceased relatives, and contact us directly through the portal.

Please go [here](#) to access the PBB Participant Portal. If you have not accessed the PBB Participant Portal before or do not have log-in information for the portal, please complete the registration form [here](#). If you're having trouble logging in to the portal, please reach out to us by email at pbbregistry@emory.edu.

- **Can I access my deceased family member's records?**

If your deceased family member participated in the state's Michigan Long-Term PBB Study and you are the next of kin, you may request their records be sent to you by completing the records request form [here](#).

If you are unsure if your deceased family member was a part of the state's Long-Term PBB Study or you believe they have PBB research records, please contact Matthew Bursley (bursleym@michigan.gov) with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

- **Will current Registry members be included in any upcoming research?**

Participation in PBB research includes a blood draw and completion of a health questionnaire. However, we are not currently enrolling in any new studies. If a study is started, you will be contacted about participation. If you have previously participated in a study, please know that this data is still being analyzed and still contributing to new findings! We share all new findings with our community partners and during our yearly PBB community meetings.

- **Should health conditions that developed after I (or my family) joined the registry be reported?**

We have developed a PBB Participant Portal where you can update health information by completing the Comprehensive Health Questionnaire. We are currently working on developing a shorter questionnaire specifically for updating you and your family's health information.

Please go [here](#) to access the PBB Participant Portal. A link to the Comprehensive Health Questionnaire is on the "My Forms" page. If you have not accessed the PBB Participant Portal before or do not have log-in information for the portal, please complete the registration form [here](#). If you're having trouble logging in to the portal, please reach out to us by email at pbbregistry@emory.edu.

Blood, Soil, and Animal Testing

- **How can I be added to the registry or have my PBB levels tested (through a medical provider, research participation, or on my own)?**

The PBB Registry continues to analyze cohort data and research the long-term health effects of PBB exposure. However, we are not currently collecting blood samples for PBB testing because of our current funding situation. While we are actively seeking additional funding to continue PBB testing in the future, we currently do not have the resources to conduct PBB testing. If you would like to express the importance of PBB testing to you and your community, feel free to contact your state and federal representatives as private citizens and tell them why continued and increased NIH funding for environmental health is important.

In the past, we have looked for commercial labs that can test for PBB in the blood, but we could not find any alternatives. Also, blood testing for PBB is not a routine test available at doctor's offices and is not a standard laboratory procedure. Our apologies for not being able to offer you a testing option at this time.

As mentioned, we are still conducting research with the data we have collected and reporting that information back to the community through PBB community meetings (both in-person and virtual) as well as on our website. Learn more about our past community meetings by clicking [here](#).

If you would like to be added to the mailing list to receive information about upcoming PBB community meetings, research findings, or future research opportunities, please email us your contact information at pbbregistry@emory.edu.

You can also complete the "Health Research Interest Form" [here](#) to be added to our list of future research participants. After finishing the interest form, you will observe a screen that thanks you for your time and interest in our research. You will not receive a follow-up email afterwards to confirm that we have received your form, but please note that your completion has been recorded.

- **Is PBB in water supply or soil? Is testing available?**

PBB tends to bind to the soil and stay put. PBB is lipophilic, meaning it dissolves much more easily in fat than in water. This means that PBBs are highly sorbed to soil surfaces and organic matter, persistent in soil, and less likely to move in water. However, PBB has been detected at low levels in groundwater near the Gratiot County Landfill, where they disposed of over 150,000 lbs. of PBB.

For information on soil testing and remediation efforts in St. Louis, we recommend reviewing the following resources:

- St. Louis Superfund Site:
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [Site Information](#)
 - Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE): [Site Information](#)
- Burial Pits:
 - Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR): [Site Information](#)

- Private Environmental Testing:
 - Summit Environmental Technologies, LLC: [PBB – PBDE Testing Services Information](#)
 - Call 1-800-278-0140 to get a quote for PBB testing of environmental samples (not blood)

If you have any more questions, we encourage you to contact these agencies directly for the most up-to-date information on soil testing and potential remediation in your area.

Medical Assistance

- **Are there medical resources (increased awareness, compensation, etc.) for those impacted by PBB?**

We are not currently aware of any programs that offer compensation for medical bills associated with potential PBB-related health effects. We encourage you to discuss PBB with your healthcare provider and have developed several resources (shared below) to help.

- **How can I provide information about PBB (or the CME course) to my medical provider?**

We have developed several resources to help educate healthcare professionals:

- **Two Fact Sheets for Healthcare Providers** – Click [here](#) and [here](#) to access fact sheets made to be shared with healthcare providers about PBB exposure and related health effects.
- **Continued Medical Education** – Click [here](#) for direct access to a course healthcare providers can take to better understand PBB exposure and its health implications.

We encourage you to share these resources with your healthcare provider to help them better understand PBB exposure and its potential health impacts.

Other

- **Is removal/excretion of PBB possible? What has been tested to remove PBB from the body?**

PBB gradually leaves the body after exposure. On average, it takes about 12 years for half of the PBB in the body to be eliminated. There is currently no medical treatment that will lower PBB levels in the human body. We recommend screening for potential conditions related to PBB exposure (such as breast cancer screenings, thyroid blood testing), and that any potential treatment plans be discussed with a licensed medical doctor.

There is currently no conclusive scientific evidence that taking herbal supplements or eating certain foods can remove PBBs from the body. Further, there is no conclusive scientific evidence that therapeutic apheresis (blood filtering) can reduce PBB levels.

To explore ways to reduce PBB levels, we recently completed a study examining whether weight loss, with and without the aid of a weight loss pill, a low-fat diet, and light exercise over six months, would speed up the elimination of PBB. We did not find any association between weight loss and an increased elimination of PBB, thus concluding that we do not have any reliable data on ways to reduce PBB levels.

- **What are the geographical areas of exposure? How widespread was the contamination area?**

Over 500 farms were quarantined across the state (click [here](#) for a map). While farms across the state were contaminated, some areas were more affected than others, including Newago, Mecosta, and Missaukee counties. St. Louis, Michigan was also highly affected because the manufacturer of PBB disposed of it in local landfills, and many of the residents worked at the facility. In fact, most Michiganders living in the state during the early to mid-1970's are likely to have consumed contaminated meat, eggs, and dairy products. In addition, our research has shown that children born to mothers with high levels of PBB were also exposed in the womb and through breastmilk.

- **What is the history of the contamination incident and PBBs in Michigan?**

To learn more about the history of PBB in Michigan please visit the following resources:

- [PBB Registry History](#)
- [Oral History Project](#)
- [Pine River Superfund Citizen Task Force](#)
- [Michigan Department of Health & Human Services](#)
- [The PBB Disaster at 50](#)