

March 2025 Virtual Community Meeting – Top 10 FAQs

- **Researched Health Conditions**

- 1. 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://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP15012>

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.

- 2. Does PBB stay in the body for life? If so, are there any ways to remove it?**

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.

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.

- Health Concerns

3. Should I be worried about donating blood?

You can donate blood and plasma safely. We consulted with blood banking professionals and learned that when you donate blood, it is combined with other donor's blood before it is given to a recipient, either as whole blood or as blood products. And, of course, the donated blood is then mixed with the recipient's blood. Therefore, any PBB you have in your blood will be diluted to such a degree that it is unlikely to pose a risk to the recipient.

4. Should I be concerned about breastfeeding my future children?

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 about research findings related to transferring PBB from mother to child, please click [here](#).

5. 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.

- Blood, Soil, and Animal Testing

6. Is there any way to get 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, at this time, we are not 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 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 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.

7. Is soil testing available for residents who own land in St. Louis or for those around animal burial pits?

Not all soil in St. Louis has been completely remediated. Initial remediation efforts covered a 12-block area around the factory, reducing DDT levels to 5 parts per million (ppm). Since then, the EPA has lowered the acceptable level of DDT to 1 ppm, but it is unclear if further remediation will occur. Additionally, areas such as soil around trees, under decks, and in gardens were sometimes left untreated.

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): [Animal Burial Pit Information](#)
- **Private Environmental Testing:**
 - Submit 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.

- Accessing Records

8. How can I access my records if I was a past PBB research participant? Are there any IT services that can help me if I have trouble accessing them?

For request 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](#).

- Engagement & Outreach

9. How can I support the continuation of this research and/or increase awareness of PBB and its consequences?

Community members affected by the PBB contamination have helped the research efforts in many ways, including the following:

- Helped us find locations to host community meetings and research appointments.
- Shared information regarding PBB community meetings with family, friends, and neighbors.
- Contacted their state and federal representatives to request support of PBB research as private citizens.

To learn more about ways to get involved, please visit our website [here](#) or email us at pbbregistry@emory.edu with specific interests and ideas. We also post updates on our PBB Research Facebook page, which can be accessed [here](#). You can also complete the “Health Research Interest Form” [here](#) to be added to our list of future research participants.

10. What outreach has been done for Native American tribes and people living in Detroit/urban areas?

Many people remember the PBB Disaster as a rural issue that affected farmers, when in fact it was a major episode of food contamination that exposed nearly everyone living in the state (approximately 8.5 million people). The PBB Registry Leadership Team has worked to raise awareness about how widespread the disaster was and thereby engage Michiganders across the state, including those in Detroit and other urban areas and in Native American communities. Individuals from these communities participated in the Michigan PBB Oral History Project between 2018 and 2020, which can be accessed [here](#). Members of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan helped organize and participated in the Michigan PBB Disaster at 50 Conference at Alma College in 2023, as well as contributed to the essay collection published in 2024, *The Michigan PBB Disaster at 50: Reflections, Critical Lessons, and a Path Forward*. We seek to grow our outreach to and relationship with these communities in the future.