

# Elevated PFAS found in fish at Watson Pond in Taunton. What you need to know.

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A recent advisory from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) listed Taunton's Watson Pond as one of 13 state-run water bodies with elevated levels of PFAS chemicals found in the fish.

Under the state-issued freshwater fish advisory for Watson Pond, it is recommended that people should restrict their consumption of fish caught in the pond to no more than one meal a week. People deemed "sensitive," including children under 12, pregnant women, nursing mothers and women of childbearing age, should restrict fish consumption from Watson Pond to no more than two meals a month.

Often referred to as "forever chemicals," per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), are found in industrial processes that produce things like furniture, clothing, cookware and fire retardants.

According to the DPH, the chemicals are toxic, don't degrade, spread fast and easily into water, soil, food, air and even animals, and they have been linked to a number of cancers, birth defects and conditions that weaken the immune system.

Simply put, cleaning or cooking fish will not get rid of PFAS. There is no way to remove it.



Kids line the shore of the beach at Watson Pond in Taunton for the annual fishing derby in this undated file photo. *Taunton Daily Gazette File Photo*

According to the advisory, issued by the DPH on March 6, elevated levels of PFAS were detected in fish sampled from:

- Ashland Reservoir in Ashland
- Chicopee Reservoir in Chicopee
- Lake Cochituate in Natick
- Dennison Lake in Winchendon
- Dunn Pond in Gardner
- Fearing Pond in Plymouth
- Houghtons Pond in Milton
- Pearce Lake in Saugus
- Pequot Pond in Westfield
- Lake Quinsigamond in Worcester
- Walden Pond in Concord
- Wallum Lake in Douglas

- Watson Pond in Taunton

Swimming in Watson Pond is considered safe

Despite the warning, DPH also emphasized that its PFAS testing concluded that levels were not found to be unsafe for swimming and other recreational activities. No precautions need to be taken to play in the water.

The state's Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) manages state water bodies and parks like Watson Pond State Park.

DCR's Acting Communications Director Ilyse Wolberg, in a statement, said "To prioritize health and safety, DCR will post signage alerting the public of the fish consumption advisories at 13 state parks, including Watson Pond. Based on recommendations from the Department of Public Health, it is advised that the public limit fish consumption from Watson Pond."