

Proper Disposal of Medication:

Pills, capsules or other solid wastes:

Mix medication with an undesirable substance, such as kitty litter, to discourage anyone from eating it, and place into a nondescript container, such as an empty can or sealable bag. Seal the container with duct or other opaque tape, double-bag and place in the trash.

Liquid Medications: Add kitty litter or coffee grounds. Remove all personal information from the container. Seal container with duct or other opaque tape to prevent leakage, double-bag and place in the trash.

Unused vials, ampoules and IV bags:

Remove all personal information from the item and wrap in duct or other opaque tape to minimize breakage. Place in an opaque plastic sealable container, double-bag and place in the trash.

All discarded items should be sealed, double-bagged and placed in the trash.

Avoid putting medications into any material or food that might be attractive to pets or wildlife.



References:

Associated Press. (2008). *An AP investigation: Pharmaceuticals found in drinking water*. Retrieved from http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/pharmawater_site/.

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Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. (updated November 2007). *A remedy for residential drug disposal*. Retrieved from www.deq.state.mi.us/documents/deq-ess-cau-rxbrochure.pdf.

Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission. (n.d.). *How to properly dispose of unwanted medication*. Retrieved from www.orsanco.org.

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How to Properly Dispose of **UNWANTED OR EXPIRED MEDICATION**



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Background:

Traditionally, it was a common practice to flush any unwanted or expired medication down the toilet or drain in order to prevent their misuse or abuse. Flushed medications could either end up in septic tanks or pass through wastewater treatment plants. Antibiotics and other medications that are flushed into septic tanks have the ability to eliminate beneficial bacteria that are essential for the septic system to operate. Some medications that enter the sewer system are likely to pass through the wastewater treatment plants into the ground water or surface water supply. Many of these wastewater treatment plants do not have the necessary mechanisms in place to completely remove many of these chemicals from the treated water.

Researchers are currently trying to determine if relatively low levels of pharmaceuticals found in the environment (such as in streams and lakes) can negatively impact populations of fish, aquatic insects, plants or other species of wildlife associated with these habitats.



The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) conducted a nationwide survey of 139 streams in 30 states for the presence of pharmaceuticals, hormones and other organic wastewater contaminants. They found that a wide range of these chemicals were present in nearly 80 percent of the samples tested. Individually, the concentration of these products did not exceed drinking-water quality guidelines, however, the potential interactive effects that may occur from a mixture of these products is currently unknown.

A survey conducted in 2008 by the Associated Press found trace amounts of several pharmaceuticals in the drinking water supplied to at least 46 million Americans in two dozen major U.S. metropolitan areas. Researchers are currently trying to determine if these low levels in drinking water can pose any sort of threat to humans. To date, no evidence has proven this theory correct.

Do NOT Flush Medications Unless Specified:

The Office of National Drug Control Policy provides information on how to dispose of unused prescription drugs at: http://whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/prescrip_disposal.pdf.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has a list of prescription drugs that are recommended to be flushed rather than placed into the trash. Check out this list on their website at www.fda.gov/ prior to throwing any unwanted or expired medication into the trash.

Pharmaceutical Drug Take-Back Programs:

Check with your local pharmacy to see if they accept medications back from the public as a community service. Some substances, such as prescription painkillers, can only be accepted under specific arrangements, which are regulated by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration.

There may be community drug take-back programs offered by local household hazardous waste collections. Contact your city or county government's household trash and recycling service to see if a prescription drug take-back program is available in your area. Other local contacts are also available at: www.michigan.gov/degreswastecontacts.

