

Do your part to limit the release of pharmaceuticals, of any type, back into the environment. Properly dispose of unused medications by following the guidelines below.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy recommends that you:

- ◆ Take unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs out of their original containers & *throw them in the trash*.
- ◆ Mix prescription drugs with an *undesirable substance*, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter, and put them in impermeable, non-descript containers, such as empty cans or sealable bags.
- ◆ *Don't flush* prescription drugs down the toilet unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs doing so.

◆ Take advantage of *community pharmaceutical take-back programs* that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. Some communities have pharmaceutical take-back programs or community solid-waste programs that allow the public to bring certain unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. Where these exist, they are a good way to dispose of unused pharmaceuticals.

- ◆ For information on the state and local waste management authorities in your area go to:

www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/stateweb.htm

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How To Properly Dispose of Unwanted Medication



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The water we drink comes from our streams, lakes, rivers and underground aquifers. So, it's very important that each person does his or her part to reduce the pollution that enters the waterways that carry our drinking water.

Pharmaceuticals can enter our waterways through several different pathways: Wastes from pets and livestock can run off into streams. Unused amounts of the medicines we take pass through our bodies and into our sewer systems. People also fail to properly dispose of unwanted medicines, contributing to the problem.

Do you know how to properly dispose of unwanted medication? Have you ever thought about the unused medications that are dumped down the drain or flushed down the toilet? Those medicines can end up back in the environment.

Medicines flushed down the toilet go to one of two places: septic tanks or through sanitary sewers and into wastewater treatment plants which may not fully or effectively remove all of the pharmaceutical waste. These small amounts of pharmaceutical wastes can get back into the environment. Very low levels of pharmaceuticals can be found in our lakes, streams and rivers.

Researchers are trying to determine the effects of pharmaceuticals in our waterways



Researchers are trying to determine: 1) whether these levels affect the fish and wildlife that use the waterways; 2) whether these chemicals end up back in the water we drink; and if so, 3) whether the very low levels detected pose a health risk to people.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) as well as other agencies, researchers from colleges and universities, research foundations and industry scientists are studying the problem and working toward solutions.

A wealth of information pertaining to this issue can be found on the Internet. You may find the websites below to be helpful:

- ◆ Guidelines for proper disposal of medications:
www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/factsht/proper_disposal.html
www.smarxtdisposal.net
 - ◆ U.S. EPA information on pharmaceuticals in the environment:
www.epa.gov/ppcp/faq.html
 - ◆ U.S. Geological Survey information on pharmaceuticals in the environment:
toxics.usgs.gov/regional/emc
 - ◆ American Water Works Association:
www.awwa.org
www.drinktap.org/consumerdnn
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