



HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNWANTED/UNUSED PHARMACEUTICALS

The common practice of flushing pharmaceuticals down the drain is no longer considered a desirable method of disposing unused pharmaceuticals. Wastewater treatment plants and septic systems are not designed to treat pharmaceutical waste and the drugs often end up in our waterways, and ultimately in our drinking water. Recent studies have found traces of painkillers, estrogen, antidepressants, blood-pressure medicines, etc., in water samples from 30 states. Studies have linked hormone exposure to reproductive defects in fish, and have linked environmental exposure to antibiotics to the development of drug-resistant germs.

Many public health and safety regulations apply to the disposal of unused pharmaceuticals, and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency is working with stakeholders to find convenient and environmentally responsible ways to manage waste pharmaceuticals.

Waste pharmaceuticals include over-the counter and prescription medications, controlled substances and personal care products. These wastes come in the form of solid pills and capsules, creams, liquids and aerosols. Pharmaceuticals intended for pets should be treated the same as those prescribed to human.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Recommended Handling/Disposal Options for Households

REDUCE PHARMACEUTICAL WASTE WHENEVER POSSIBLE

- Use all antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor. Not using all doses of an antibiotic could lead to development of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria.
- Buy an amount of pharmaceutical that can reasonably be used before the expiration date.
- Ask your doctor to prescribe only enough to see if a new medication will work for you and in the lowest dose advisable.

DISPOSE OF THE REMAINING PHARMACEUTICAL PROPERLY

- Do not flush pharmaceuticals down the drain.
- Whenever possible, take your unused pharmaceuticals to a pharmaceutical collection program or event. **St. Clair County along with the Environmental Protection Agency and Archs' RxMeds Community Partnership is sponsoring an event at the Schnucks Pharmacy in Swansea, Illinois the fourth Thursday of each month from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M...** Note: If you choose to store your waste while you wait for a medication collection event, please minimize the risk of accidental poisoning or overdose by storing medication out of reach of children or in a locked cabinet.
- If you dispose of your unused pharmaceuticals in the trash, be sure to do the following:
 1. Remove or mark over all labels that identify the materials as medications or that could provide personal information about you, including prescription information.
 2. Make the medication unattractive to children and thieves by dissolving it in a small amount of water or alcohol, or by grinding it up with coffee grounds or kitty litter.
 3. Put the medication in a secondary container or small plastic bag and hide it in your trash.
- Never burn pharmaceuticals or personal care products in burn barrel. Uncontrolled burning can create dioxins and other toxic air pollutants.

Source: Illinois Environmental Protection Agency



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