

HOUSEHOLD PHARMACEUTICAL WASTE DISPOSAL

This fact sheet provides guidance to households on the disposal of waste pharmaceuticals generated at home, including leftover or out-of-date prescription and non-prescription medications. This does not address the requirements for doctor offices, medical clinics, veterinary clinics, hospitals or care facilities.

The old recommendation of flushing pharmaceuticals down the toilet is the least desirable alternative for the disposal of leftover or outdated medications. Wastewater treatment plants and septic systems are not designed to treat pharmaceutical waste. Recent research has demonstrated that pharmaceuticals exist in the environment as a result of improper disposal of unused medicines and because they are excreted by the person using the medicines. So, don't flush your waste medications unless the product label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to flush the medication down the toilet or drain.

Instead, consider one of these alternatives:

- + Reduce pharmaceutical waste when possible by purchasing only as much as you can reasonably expect to use before the expiration date.
- + Ask your health care provider or local pharmacist if they offer disposal or if a drug take-back or collection program is available in your community.
- + If a drug take-back or collection program is not available:
 - ❖ Take your prescription drugs out of their original containers.
 - ❖ Conceal or remove any personal information from the original medicine container, including the prescription number, by covering the label with duct tape, black permanent marker, or by scratching it off.
 - ❖ Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as used cat litter or used coffee grounds.
 - ❖ Put this mixture into a disposable container, such as an empty margarine tub or a sealable plastic bag.
 - ❖ Place the sealed container with the mixture and the empty drug container in the trash.