

Prescription Drug and Personal Care Product Disposal

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Have you wondered whether you dispose of leftover prescription drugs and personal care products (PPCPs) properly?

What is the proper disposal method?

Why should we be concerned?

The U.S. Geological Survey found that 80% of the waterways they sampled nationally contained low levels of at least one type of pharmaceutical chemical, with half of the streams containing seven or more.

Past practices have advised to “flush” leftover drugs down the toilet. Human excretion is also a source of the drugs being detected. We now know that waste water treatment plants were not designed to filter out drugs, so many drugs and other compounds are being detected in drinking water.

The effects of most of these products detected in drinking water are unknown, but increased concentrations of antibiotics have produced “super bugs”; bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.

There are no national guidelines for the proper disposal of PPCPs, but there are some guidelines that you can use that offer safe disposal methods to protect water quality and human health.

If you are instructed by your physician to finish a prescription, do so. For any unused portion of the prescription or other health care product, follow the disposal steps for particular types of medications. Always “black out” any personal information on the label to protect privacy but ensure the drug name is visible. At present, there are few, if any “take back” programs for prescription drugs. Call your pharmacy to confirm information on the disposal of prescription drugs.

Capsules and Tablets in Containers:

- Secure the cap on the bottle.
- Cover the cap with duct tape, fully sealing the container to prevent breaking or leakage.
- Double wrap the sealed containers in opaque plastic bags. Tightly tie or secure the bags with duct tape to prevent leakage and place in the trash.

Blister-Packaged Capsules and Tablets:

- Wrap package with several layers of duct tape, allowing visibility of the product name. This will prevent blister packs from breakage.

- Double bag the sealed packs in opaque plastic bags. Tightly tie or secure the bags with duct tape to prevent leakage and place in the trash.

Ampules, Vials and Needles:

- Do not open or alter the original contents if possible
- Call the Washtenaw County 24 hour home toxics hotline (734) 222-3950 for information and drop off hours at 705 North Zeeb Road. Also check the “Turning Trash into Treasure” guide on www.ewashtenaw.org for a pharmacy drop off location near you.
- Residents outside Washtenaw County should call their Solid Waste Department or Waste Hauling Services for instruction on proper disposal.

Liquid PPCPs:

- Seal the contained with duct tape to prevent leaks and breakage.
- To take the maximum precautions, add salt, a pungent spice like nutmeg or mustard or a bitter tasting additive. Kitty litter, sawdust or an absorbing agent can also be added to the liquid to repel animals.
- Double bag the sealed containers in opaque plastic bags. Tightly tie or secure the bag with duct tape to prevent leakage and place in the trash.
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If you would like a brochure that contains all of this information to keep on hand, call the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner’s Office at 734 222 6833 or 734 994 2525.



Prescription Drug and Personal Care Product Disposal

Guide No. 9

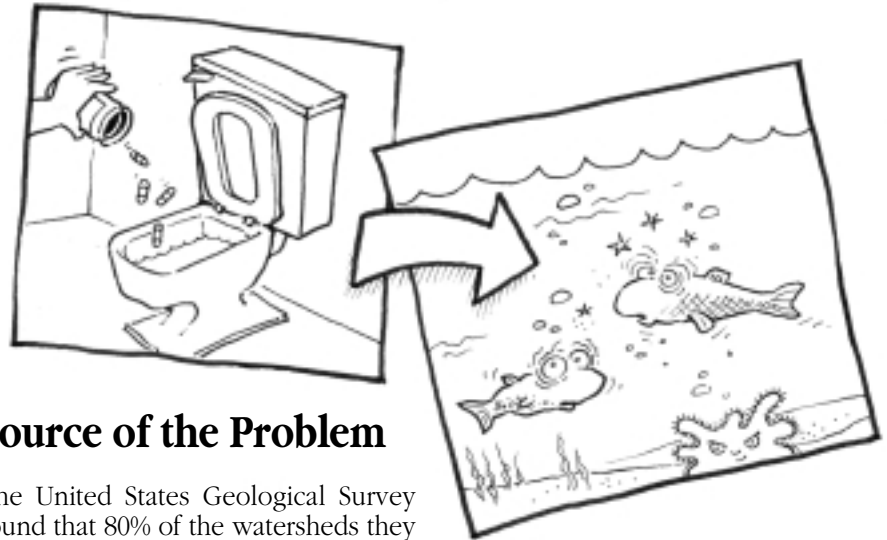


Why be concerned?

Increasing amounts of prescription drugs and personal care products (PPCPs) are being detected in U.S. rivers, waterways, and groundwater.

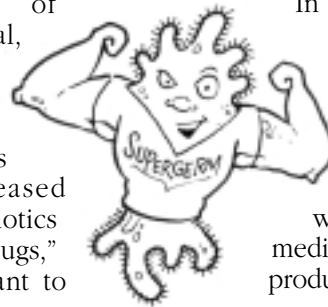
Wastewater treatment facilities are not equipped to “filter out” these chemicals, so drugs like cholesterol reducers, blood pressure medication, sleeping pills, hypnotics, hormone replacement therapy, and antibiotics are being detected in drinking water supplies.

These medications endanger aquatic life in waterways all across the country. The risk to humans and animals of long-term exposure to these contaminants in drinking water is unknown.



Source of the Problem

The United States Geological Survey found that 80% of the watersheds they sampled nationally contained at least one type of pharmaceutical chemical, with half of the streams containing seven or more. While most of the effects of these products are unknown, increased concentrations of antibiotics have produced “super bugs,” bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.



In the United States there is no national guidance for the proper disposal of PPCPs. However, there are measures you can take at home to prevent the contamination of waterways from unused medication and personal care products.



Human excretion is responsible for the majority of pharmaceutical pollution in our waterways. Animal feedlots also release antibiotics from waste outflows after storms.

Antibiotics from cleaning products end up in local streams as well. However, a significant portion of the pollution is a result of the improper disposal of unused drugs and personal care products.

Previous information campaigns encouraged consumers to “flush” excess pharmaceuticals because of the potential harm they posed to children when left in the home or placed in household trash.

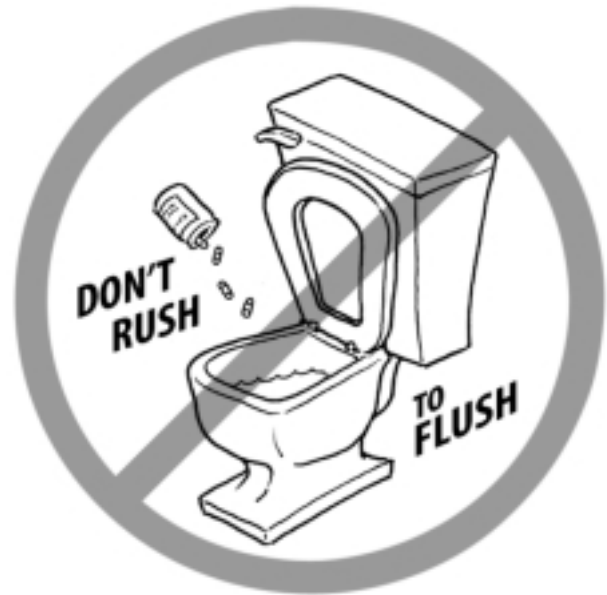


STEPS FOR SAFE DISPOSAL OF PPCPs

If you are instructed to do so by your physician, finish the prescription. For any unused portions, follow the steps below. Remember to first remove or black-out any personal information on the label to protect privacy, but ensure the drug name is still visible.

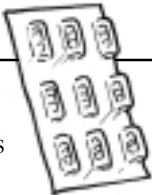
Capsules and Tablets in Containers

- Secure the cap on the bottle.
- Cover top with duct tape, fully sealing the container to prevent breaking or leakage.
- Double wrap the sealed containers in opaque plastic bags. Tightly tie or secure the bags to prevent leakage and place in trash.



Blister-Packaged Capsules and Tablets

- Wrap package with several layers of duct tape, allowing visibility of the product name. This will prevent blister packs from breakage.
- Double bag the sealed packs in opaque plastic bags. Secure the bags to prevent leakage and place in trash.



Ampules, Vials, and Needles

- Do not open or alter the original contents if possible.
- Call the Washtenaw County 24 hour home toxics hotline (734) 222-3950 for information and drop off hours at 705 N. Zeeb Road. Also check the *Turning Trash to Treasure* guide on www.ewashtenaw.org for a pharmacy drop off location near you.
- Residents outside Washtenaw County should call their Solid Waste Department or Waste Hauling Services for instructions on proper disposal.



Liquid PPCPs

- Seal the container with duct tape to prevent leaks and breakage.
- Double bag in opaque plastic bags and place in the trash. Carefully seal the bag to prevent leakage.
- To take further precautions, add salt, a pungent spice such as nutmeg or mustard, or a bitter tasting additive. Kitty litter, sawdust or an absorbing agent can also be added to the liquid to repel animals. Then double bag in a tightly sealed opaque plastic bag and place in the trash.



Prescription Drugs

- At present there are few, if any "take back" programs for prescription drugs.
- Call your local pharmacy to confirm information on the disposal of prescription drugs.

GETTING HELP

Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner's Office.....(734) 222-6833
or (734) 994-2525

Washtenaw County Home Toxics Program.....(734) 222-3950

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.....(800) 662-9278

See the Washtenaw County website at www.ewashtenaw.org