

How to Dispose of Medicines Properly

DON'T: Flush expired or unwanted prescription and over-the-counter drugs down the toilet or drain unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to do so.

DO: Return unwanted or expired prescription and over-the-counter drugs to a drug take-back program or follow the steps for household disposal below.

1ST CHOICE: DRUG TAKE-BACK EVENTS

To dispose of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service and ask if a drug take-back program is available in your community. Some counties hold household hazardous waste collection days, where prescription and over-the-counter drugs are accepted at a central location for proper disposal.



Drug Take-Back Event

Courtesy: Upper Watauga Riverkeeper
and Appalachian Voices

2ND CHOICE: HOUSEHOLD DISPOSAL STEPS*



1. Take your prescription drugs out of their original containers.



2. Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds.



3. Put the mixture into a disposable container with a lid, such as an empty margarine tub, or into a sealable bag.



4. Conceal or remove any personal information, including Rx number, on the empty containers by covering it with permanent marker or duct tape, or by scratching it off.



5. The sealed container with the drug mixture, and the empty drug containers, can now be placed in the trash.

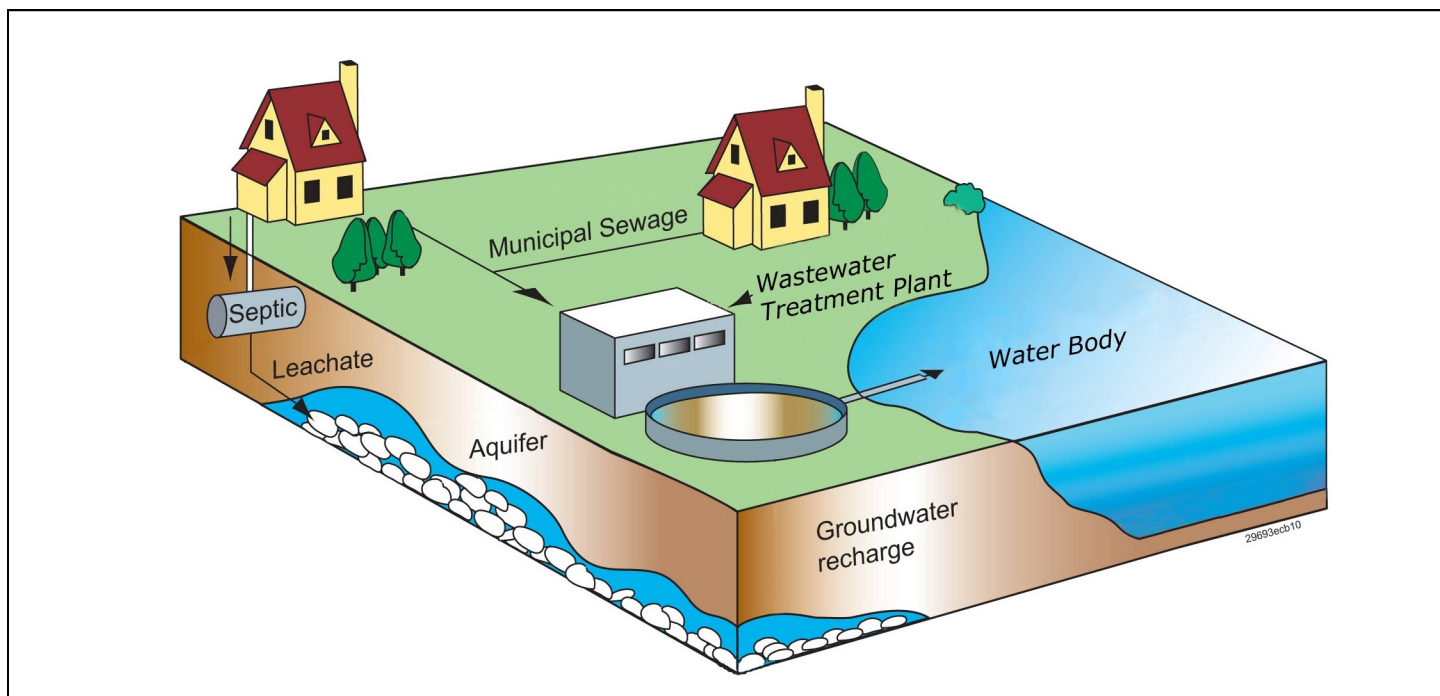
How Proper Disposal of Medicines Protects You and the Earth:

- Prevents poisoning of children and pets
- Deters misuse by teenagers and adults
- Avoids health problems from accidentally taking the wrong medicine, too much of the same medicine, or a medicine that is too old to work well
- Keeps medicines from entering streams and rivers when poured down the drain or flushed down the toilet

How Improper Disposal of Medicines May End Up in Our Drinking Water Sources

In homes that use septic tanks, prescription and over-the-counter drugs flushed down the toilet can leach into the ground and seep into ground water.

In cities and towns where residences are connected to wastewater treatment plants, prescription and over-the-counter drugs poured down the sink or flushed down the toilet can pass through the treatment system and enter rivers and lakes. They may flow downstream to serve as sources for community drinking water supplies. Water treatment plants are generally not equipped to routinely remove medicines.



For more information, go to www.epa.gov/ppcp/
Or call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791

DO's and DON'Ts

Safe Disposal of Needles and Other Sharps Used At Home, At Work, or While Traveling

Do

- Immediately place used needles and other sharps in a sharps disposal container to reduce the risk of needle-sticks, cuts, or punctures from loose sharps.
- Use an FDA-cleared sharps disposal container, if possible. If an FDA-cleared container isn't available, some organizations and community guidelines recommend using a heavy-duty plastic household container (i.e. laundry detergent container) as an alternative.
- Make sure that if a household disposal container is used, it has the basic features of a good disposal container. (See box at right for more info.)
- Be prepared — carry a portable sharps disposal container for travel.
- Follow your community guidelines for getting rid of your sharps disposal container.
- Call your local trash or public health department (listed in the county and city government section of your phone book) to find out about sharps disposal programs in your area.
- Ask your health care provider, veterinarian, local hospital or pharmacist
 - where and how you can obtain an FDA-cleared sharps disposal container,
 - if they can dispose of your used needles and other sharps, or
 - if they know of safe disposal programs near you.
- Keep all needles and other sharps and sharps disposal containers out of reach of children and pets.



All sharps disposal containers should be:

- made of a heavy-duty plastic;
- able to close with a tight-fitting, puncture-proof lid, without sharps being able to come out;
- upright and stable during use;
- leak-resistant; and
- properly labeled.

Don't

- Throw needles and other sharps into the trash.
- Flush needles and other sharps down the toilet.
- Put needles and other sharps in your recycling bin — they are not recyclable.
- Try to remove, bend, break, or recap needles used by another person. This can lead to accidental needle sticks, which may cause serious infections.
- Attempt to remove the needle without a needle clipper device because the needles could fall, fly off, or get lost and injure someone.

Best Way to Get Rid of Used Needles and Other Sharps:

Step 1: Place all needles and other sharps in a sharps disposal container immediately after they have been used.

Step 2: Dispose of used sharps disposal containers according to your community guidelines.

For more information visit, www.fda.gov/safesharpsdisposal.