

A REMEDY FOR Residential Drug Disposal

Since the 1990s, studies have revealed low levels of pharmaceutical compounds persisting in surface and ground water across the U.S. This is the very same water used for drinking water. Although there are no known health risks to people at these low levels, some research has shown impacts to amphibians, fish, wildlife, and bacteria. Without improvements in disposal and wastewater treatment, we expect these levels to increase as more people continue to take more and more medications.

What can residents do now to help protect our environment?

1. Take medications as prescribed
2. Keep unused medications to a minimum
3. Store medications in their original container and in a secure place to prevent abuse. The labels contain helpful safety information, the container is chemically compatible with the drug, and the caps are typically water and child proof.
4. And, when you have unwanted medications...
 - **DO NOT** flush drugs down the sink or toilet!
 - Participate in takeback programs for incineration where possible. Online directories for drug collections include:
www.greatlakescleanwater.org
www.disposemymeds.org
www.michigan.gov/wasterecycling





5. Dispose of unwanted medications in the trash if necessary, unless the medication is a chemotherapy agent. Chemotherapy agents should be returned to the clinic that dispensed them for proper disposal. Scratch out, cover with tape, or use permanent marker to make personal information unreadable. To reduce the opportunity for misuse, add a small amount of water to partially dissolve pills or capsules. For liquids, add enough salt, flour, charcoal, or nontoxic powdered spice, like turmeric or mustard, to make a pungent, unsightly mixture. Seal the container with duct or other opaque tape to prevent leaks and breakage. For blister packs, unused ampules, vials, and IV bags, wrap the packages in multiple layers of duct or other opaque tape. Place the unwanted medicine in an opaque plastic container and dispose in the regular trash.

Commonly collected items include:

- Prescription drugs
- Over-the-counter drugs
- Medication samples
- Vitamins
- Medicated ointments & lotions
- Inhalers
- Veterinary drugs

Work with your healthcare provider to determine proper disposal options for chemotherapy drugs which can be toxic and are generally not accepted at collections.



For more information, contact the DEQ Environmental Assistance Center by calling 1-800-662-9278

or emailing deq-assist@michigan.gov

02/2016