



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESCRIBING MEDICATIONS

You can help protect and preserve the environment for future generations by using the following recommendations when prescribing medications.

- Prescribe only enough medication and/or provide limited free samples to see if that regime will work for your patient.
- Prescribe the lowest effective dose.
- Talk to your patients or veterinary clients about alternatives, including lifestyle changes that may minimize the need for long-term medication.
- Refer patients to on-line resources to locate local takeback programs for households like: [www.michigan.gov/wasterecycling](http://www.michigan.gov/wasterecycling), [www.michigan.gov/cleansweep](http://www.michigan.gov/cleansweep), [www.takebacknetwork.com](http://www.takebacknetwork.com), [www.disposemy meds.org](http://www.disposemy meds.org), [www.dea diversion.usdoj.gov](http://www.dea diversion.usdoj.gov), [www.wmtakebackmeds.org](http://www.wmtakebackmeds.org) and [www.greatlakescleanwater.org](http://www.greatlakescleanwater.org).
- Let your patients or veterinary clients know that flushing unused medicines has potentially serious environmental implications.
- Provide copies preferably, or refer patients, to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) guidance *A Remedy for Prescription Drug Disposal* at [www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ess-cau-RXbrochure\\_279298\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ess-cau-RXbrochure_279298_7.pdf) which identifies alternatives to flushing medications from a home.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

See the U.S. EPA website about Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products (PPCPs) and related links at [www.epa.gov/ppcp](http://www.epa.gov/ppcp).

Contact the DEQ Environmental Assistance Center by calling (800) 662-9278 or email [deq-assist@michigan.gov](mailto:deq-assist@michigan.gov) or contact your Resource Management Division [District Office](#) with waste management questions.



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## MICHIGAN MEDICAL AND VETERINARY CARE FACILITIES



# PRESCRIPTION FOR CLEAN WATER:

## GUIDE FOR THE SAFE DISPOSAL OF UNUSED MEDICATIONS

## WATER CONTAMINATION

Recent studies throughout the U.S. have revealed the presence of trace amounts of pharmaceutical compounds in surface and ground water. Pharmaceutical contamination of water has a negative impact on the aquatic ecosystem, including fish, birds and other wildlife.



Currently, the risk to humans is unknown so more study is needed. Experts believe that an increase in antibiotics in water may lead to anti-



biotic resistance in pathogenic organisms. Scientists have not determined how much of the pharmaceutical contamination of water is due to human excretion and how much is derived from medications people flush down toilets and sinks. As a medical professional, you can help reduce the amount of medications that may impact our water resources.



Some organizations are helping by operating collection events to reduce the amount of unwanted medications being flushed by consumers. See page 5 for resources to help your patients locate local collection options.



## MEDICATION DISPOSAL GUIDELINES FOR FACILITIES

- Separate unwanted medications from medical waste and sharps containers - Do NOT mix.
- Return unwanted medications to the drug supplier, through a reverse distributor or directly to the pharmaceutical manufacturing company, if possible.
- Ask your drug sales representative to take back any unused samples. You may reduce your disposal costs by limiting how many free samples you accept.
- Dispose of medications properly based on the type of medication. See the Michigan Health and Hospital Association Health Care Pharmaceutical Waste Management Guide at [www.michigan.gov/deqhealthcare](http://www.michigan.gov/deqhealthcare), under Waste Health Care Resources.



- Do NOT flush medications. Flushing is not recommended and unauthorized unless you have approval from the municipal wastewater treatment plant. What is acceptable in one community may not be allowed in another because treatment plants can have different requirements.
- Do NOT flush medications if on a septic system, since this may result in costly system failure.



## TYPES OF REGULATED MEDICATIONS

Unwanted medications must be managed under the appropriate waste regulations depending on the type of medication. They may be regulated as:

- **Controlled substances.** There are concerns these medications can be abused and disposal is overseen by the federal U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (U.S. DEA). Call the U.S. DEA Detroit Field Office at (313) 234-4000 with questions or see information at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/).
- **Hazardous waste.** Medications are in this category when they are listed in the regulations or when they exhibit hazardous waste characteristics. In Michigan, facilities can choose to handle medications as universal waste. Medication examples that are managed as hazardous or universal waste are in the guidance at [www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ead-tas-univwaste\\_320878\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ead-tas-univwaste_320878_7.pdf). The specific handling requirements depend on the total amount of all hazardous waste and universal waste generated at the facility, not just the amount of unwanted medications.
- **Nonhazardous liquid waste.** When the medications are in liquid form and are not hazardous waste, see the guidance at [www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ess-p2tas-liwgenerator\\_207980\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ess-p2tas-liwgenerator_207980_7.pdf) for management requirements.
- **Solid waste.** When medications are not hazardous waste and do not contain liquids, it is legal to dispose of them in the trash if the disposal company will accept them. Incineration is presently the preferred disposal option. If incineration is not an option, consider placing the medications in the dumpster the day of pickup to reduce scavenging.