



Prescription and Veterinary Medicine Disposal

Fact Sheet

July 2022

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Environmental Health
Solid Waste Program

Unused, unwanted, or expired medicines/pharmaceuticals, including veterinary medicines/pharmaceuticals, are potentially harmful to animals, people, or the environment and must be safely disposed of to ensure others do not find and use the medication.

Households and Individuals

If you are a household or individual the following options are available for you to dispose of medications:

Take Back Programs

The best way to dispose of most types of unused or expired medication is to drop off the medicine at a drug take back site or program. You can find a DEA authorized collector in your community at [Controlled Substance Public Disposal Locations - Search Utility \(usdoj.gov\)](#). The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) also sponsors National Prescription Take Back Day each April and October in communities nationwide.

Pharmacies

Check with your pharmacist about take back programs, including mail-back programs.

Disposal At Home

When a take back program isn't readily available, there are two options for disposing of medicines at home, depending on the drug.

1) Flush Certain Medications Down the Drain

Certain medicines are especially harmful to others and have specific directions to immediately flush them down the drain when they are no longer needed, and a take back option is not readily available. [Check US FDA's list of medicines](#) recommended for disposal by flushing. Do NOT flush medications if they are not on the flush list.

2) Household Trash

If the medication is not on the flush list, then follow the FDA instructions for disposing of the medicine in the household trash. Follow these steps:

1. Remove the medicine from the original containers and mix them with something undesirable, such as used coffee grounds, dirt, or cat litter. This makes the medicine less appealing and unrecognizable.
2. Put the mixture in something you can close to prevent the drug from leaking or spilling out.
3. Throw the container in the garbage.
4. Scratch out all your personal information on the empty medicine packaging to protect your identity and privacy. Throw the packaging away.

Hospital, Pharmacies, Clinics, and Other Businesses

Hospitals, pharmacies, clinics, and other businesses generating pharmaceutical waste generally cannot use public take back program or events to dispose of expired, unwanted, or unused pharmaceuticals. Public collection events typically do not intend to manage waste from businesses or comply with the regulations applicable to business waste. Healthcare facilities and healthcare-related businesses that generate pharmaceutical wastes are responsible for appropriately managing their wastes in accordance with all local, state, and federal environmental regulations. This includes the rules for managing hazardous wastes if the pharmaceutical wastes generated are identified as hazardous waste.

Hospitals, pharmacies, clinics, and other businesses should work with a reverse distributor or hazardous waste contractor to handle their expired, unwanted, or unused pharmaceuticals.

Resources

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day

http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html

US FDA's list of medicine

<http://www.fda.gov/drugs/safe-disposal-medicines/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know>

US FDA Flush List

[Drug Disposal: FDA's Flush List for Certain Medicines | FDA](#)

DEA authorized take back locations

[Controlled Substance Public Disposal Locations - Search Utility \(usdoj.gov\)](#)