

A SAFER WAY TO DISPOSE OF UNWANTED HOUSEHOLD MEDICINES

You may have heard that unwanted medicines should be thrown in the trash, rather than flushed down the toilet or sink. *What's missing from this advice?*

DRUG TAKE-BACK PROGRAMS ARE THE SAFEST SOLUTION FOR UNWANTED MEDICINES.

We encourage following the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy guidelines, as well as this advice specific to Washington State:

FIRST. Do not flush medicines down the toilet or drain. Flushing drugs adds to pollution in our waters because wastewater and septic systems are not designed to treat these chemicals. The White House policy suggests some specific drugs be flushed; however, we view that practice as too harmful to the environment.

SECOND. Use community drug take-back programs for proper disposal. The Medicine Return Program has 37 locations in six counties in Washington. Take your unwanted medicines to one of the Group Health or Bartell Drugs locations that offers this service. Note that we cannot accept controlled substances (e.g., Oxycontin, Vicodin, etc.). Disposing of your medicines at one of these locations will ensure that your medicines will not be stolen from the garbage and will not enter our environment through landfill leachate. For locations and more information, go to www.medicinereturn.com.

LAST CHOICE. Until collection programs for unwanted medicine are available statewide, mix your medicines with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds, put this into a container with a lid, conceal personal information and place the sealed container in the trash. Make sure your trash cannot be accessed by children, pets, or others who might be looking in garbage for drugs. Putting unwanted medicines in the trash is better than flushing, but it is not the best solution to protect people and our environment. Trash disposal is not as secure – especially for controlled substances, like pain killers, which are often abused. And trash disposal does not fully protect the environment because medicines in landfills can eventually escape into our environment when landfill liquids are sent to sewage treatment plants. For the full text of the White House guidelines, go to www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/prescrip_disposal.pdf

We are working to create a statewide system to collect and safely dispose of unwanted medicines.

The critical missing link in the U.S. is a source of long-term financing for household medicine return. In British Columbia and several European countries, drug manufacturers are required to provide a medications return program. We support the creation of a secure, ongoing medicine return program provided and financed by drug producers.

Learn more at www.medicinereturn.com.

We appreciate your concern about the proper disposal of your unwanted medicines. Please call 1-800-732-9253 for medicine return locations or other questions.

This statement supported by: Group Health Cooperative • Bartell Drugs • Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs • Science and Management of Addictions (SAMA) Foundation • Sheriff John Lovick, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office • Children's Alliance • Washington State Nurses Association • Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County • Washington State Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics • Snohomish County Solid Waste Division • Public Health-Seattle & King County • Washington Poison Center • Washington State Hospice and Palliative Organization • Northwest Product Stewardship Council • Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation • Coalition for Clean Water • Sierra Club Cascade Chapter • Washington State Occupational Health Nurses • Institute of Neurotoxicology & Neurological Disorders • Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby • Washington Environmental Council • Sheriff Bill Benedict, Clallam County Sheriff • Clark County • Compassion and Choices of Washington • Earth Ministry • Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials • WashPIRG • Surfrider Foundation • Jim's Pharmacy (Sequim) • Clallam County Drug Disposal Partnership • Interagency Resource for Achieving Cooperation (IRAC) • Washington State Recycling Association • Ryan's Solution • Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of Washington • City of Seattle • School Nurse Organization of Washington • People For Puget Sound • Washington State Psychological Association • Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention • American Rivers • Association of Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses • Home Care Association of Washington • League of Women Voters • Washington Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Association

