

How to Dispose of Medicines Properly

DON'T!

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!

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.

Proper Disposal of Medicines Protects the Environment

Proper disposal keeps medicines from entering streams and rivers when poured down the drain or flushed down the toilet.

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.

1ST CHOICE: DRUG TAKE-BACK EVENTS

To dispose of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, call your Town's Police Department and ask if and when a drug take-back program is available in your community. Some Towns hold household hazardous waste collection days, where prescription and over-the-counter drugs are accepted at a central location for proper disposal.

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 non-recyclable, disposable, closeable container, 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 can now be placed in the trash. The empty drug containers, if recyclable, can be placed in the recycle; if not recyclable, it should also be placed in the trash.

Additional Information

For more information regarding household hazardous waste, please contact hhw@des.nh.gov, call (603) 271-2047, or go to <http://des.nh.gov/>.