

How to Dispose of Your Unused Medication

Safely Dispose of Your Unused Medications and SAVE Lives

- ◆ In the United States, more than 70,000 children, 18 years and younger are seen in the emergency room for unintentional overdoses of prescription and over-the-counter medications each year.*
- ◆ Medication overdoses are most common among two-year-olds.*
- ◆ Among young-people ages 12-17, prescription drugs have become the second most abused illegal drug.
- ◆ Nearly all poison deaths in the country are attributed to drugs, and most drug poisonings result from the abuse of prescription and illegal drugs.*

*From the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Teens and Prescription Drugs.

Keep Unused Medications out of the Water System and Protect Our Watershed

- ◆ More than 100 different pharmaceuticals have been detected in lakes, rivers, reservoirs and streams throughout the world.*
- ◆ Flushing leftover medications sends them into our rivers, streams, and waterways. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove them.*
- ◆ Studies have found antibiotics, anti-seizure medicines, mood stabilizers, and sex hormones in drinking water across the U.S.*
- ◆ The effects on marine life of exposure to these chemicals are well-documented and include serious harm to fish populations.*

*From the Product Stewardship Institute.

What should you do with your unused medications, including your over the counter and prescription medications? At this time, the City of Florence no longer has a drug take back/medicine disposal program to serve the community. The Public Works Department has received several inquiries as to what should be done with unused medications since there are no designated places to dispose of them. Unused medications have the potential to harm others—the leading cause of poisonings in the U.S. of children is by accidental overdose of prescription and over the counter medications. When improperly disposed of, they also negatively impact the environment. ***We ask that you NEVER FLUSH unused medications down the toilet or dump them down the sink.*** Wastewater treatment plants are designed to treat human waste, not pharmaceutical waste. Medications disposed of by flushing are discharged to the river, harm marine life, and eventually end up in the water cycle again. The long-term effects of exposure to pharmaceuticals in the water is unknown to humans, but have been documented to have harmful effects on fish and other marine animals. With that in mind, the following are the recommended disposal methods:

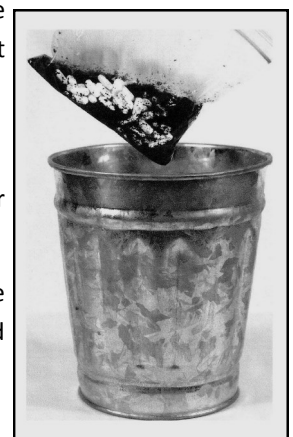


1) Talk to your pharmacy. Ask if they have a mail-in program. Some mail order pharmacies will provide return labeling for you to mail back any unused medications. Ask if you can also use their mail in program to return unused and expired over the counter medications.



2) If there are no other options for disposing your unused medications, you can discard your medications in the trash, but please follow these guidelines:

- Remove all labels from the containers, including personal information and information about the medicines it contained. Use a marker if the label cannot be removed.
- Recycle medicine containers as you are able.
- Empty the unused medications into a sealable container or zip lock bag.
- Add cat litter, coffee grounds, or other undesirable substance to the container to discourage animals and children from getting into the medicines.
- Discard the sealed container with your household trash.



POISON CONTROL HOTLINE: 1-800-222-1222 — a free service, answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week by trained professionals.