



AUBURN PHARMACY



Unused Medications

What to do with Expired or Unused Medications?

Do you have a cabinet full of old prescription or over-the-counter medicines? Would you like to dispose of them responsibly?

Too often, these medications simply sit in the cabinet. If they are discarded, they are flushed down the toilet or improperly tossed in the trash; this is dangerous for others, hazardous to the environment, and could put drugs in the hands of abusers. According to a 2014 study in *The Journal of Pediatrics*, more than 9,000 children under 7 years old are hospitalized annually due to accidental ingestion of medications. If not properly disposed of, potentially fatal doses can be consumed by curious children or wandering pets. Flushing or otherwise sending medications down the drain dissolves most medications into the sewer system. Most treatment facilities are not capable of removing these drugs from water and they are passed on to waterways and ecosystems. This can be harmful to wildlife as nearly 80% of U.S. Geologic Survey water samples contain measurable amounts of medication. McMaster University in Ontario has found that even trace amounts are detrimental to aquatic life, which raises concerns about the potential effects on the young, elderly, and pregnant women. Finally, according to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), almost 1 in 4 teens report abusing or misusing a prescription drug at least once. An unsupervised or tossed bottle of medication can be easily found and abused if a person were looking for it.

Fortunately, our local Sheriff's department works with the DEA to help the public remove medications from homes, water and trash. They gladly accept unused and expired prescription and over-the-counter medications 24 hours daily, year-round. Just bring them, excluding sharps (needles), to the front lobby and drop them in the medication disposal drop box.

Although the use of the drop box at the Sheriff's department is the preferred method for disposal, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), most medications can be thrown in the trash if done so properly.

1. Remove the medications from their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as dirt, kitty litter or used coffee grounds.
 - a. This mixture will be less appealing to children and pets and also makes the medications unrecognizable to someone who may sift through trash looking for drugs.
2. Place the mixture in a sealed container such as a zip-lock bag or empty coffee can.
 - a. This prevents anything from leaking out of a garbage bag.
3. Toss the container in the trash.
4. Scratch out personal and drug information from the bottle and discard separately.

Please consult your pharmacist or doctor for any other medication-related questions.

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