

## Get rid of unwanted medications!

What's the problem? Prescription drug abuse is increasing in central Maine, and research suggests that most people who misuse those drugs get them for free from a friend or relative. Having leftovers medications in your home is risky. Anyone visiting your house could steal them.

Once we were told to flush old drugs down the toilet. No more. *Don't flush!*

That's because antibiotics, hormones and other drugs are being found in lakes, rivers and streams, causing potential environmental and human health problems.



So what's the best way to dispose of unwanted drugs? Your unwanted medications may be disposed of in your trash. Follow these simple precautions to prevent accidental or intentional use:

1. Take unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs out of their original containers
2. Mix the prescription drugs with an undesirable substance, like used coffee grounds or kitty litter, and put them in impermeable, non-descript containers, such as empty cans or sealable bags, further ensuring that the drugs are not diverted or accidentally ingested by children or pets
3. Throw these containers in the trash
4. Flush prescription drugs down the toilet only if the accompanying patient information specifically instructs it is safe to do so
5. Return unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs to pharmaceutical take-back locations that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for safe disposal

This disposal method is supported by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Similar recommendations have been made by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the American Pharmacists Association. The recommendations are designed to reduce the diversion of prescription drugs, while also protecting the environment. They are considered interim recommendations, until more research can determine the best way to balance human health, environmental and legal issues.

For more information on proper drug disposal, contact Alison Webb at MaineGeneral Prevention Center at 872-1738 or [alison.webb@mainegeneral.org](mailto:alison.webb@mainegeneral.org)