

# MEDICINE WASTE: PHARMACEUTICAL WASTE UPDATE

## New Disposal Options for Pharmaceuticals

Pharmaceuticals are found in almost every home as well as in most schools, cruise ships, hotels, and animal care settings. Pharmaceuticals are a complicated class of chemicals generally divided into two groups -- over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and prescription medicines. Included within prescription medicines are controlled substances regulated by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). Other pharmaceutical products include free samples from health care providers and dietary supplements (vitamins).

### 1. What is the concern?

Unused, leftover pharmaceuticals are endangering our children and our families through accidental poisonings and abuse, and polluting the water supply threatening our health and the environment. Scientists are beginning to find chemicals from pharmaceuticals in almost every sample taken from surface water, effluent, and drinking water in the U.S. and Canada. Consider these facts for Washington State:

- Emergency visits involving nonmedical use of narcotic pain relievers rose 111% from 2004-2008.
- Fatal poisonings rose 395% from 1990-2006.
- 85% of fatal poisonings involved medicines in 2006.
- 32% of child poisoning deaths were caused by someone else's prescription drugs and 26% were caused by OTC drugs.
- One-third of all new prescription drug abusers were aged 12-17 in 2006. Sixty percent of teens report that prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parent's medicine cabinets.

### 2. Are medicines really hazardous waste?

Many pharmaceuticals have ingredients with characteristics that cause them to be designated as hazardous waste when disposed. To "designate" means to either be a federally regulated or state regulated hazardous waste.

### 2. How do I return unwanted medicines?

Gather your unwanted medications. Keep them in their original containers and mark out any personal information if you wish. Take the medicines to a participating pharmacy <http://www.takebackyourmeds.org/> or other collection locations in the Unwanted Medicine Return Program. In Kitsap County, you can take your medications to the following locations: (continued)



KITSAP PUBLIC  
HEALTH DISTRICT

345 6th Street  
Suite 300  
Bremerton, WA 98337

360-337-5235 t.  
360-337-5291 f.

[kitsappublichealth.org](http://kitsappublichealth.org)

**KITSAP SHERIFFS OFFICE**  
3951 Randall Way NW  
Silverdale, WA

***Accepts Controlled Substances***  
*Monday-Friday*  
*8:30 a.m. – Noon, 1:00- 4:00 p.m.*

614 Division Street  
Port Orchard, WA

*Monday-Friday*  
*9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.*

### **3. What are controlled substances?**

A controlled substance is a drug or chemical substance whose manufacture, importation, possession, and distribution of certain drugs are regulated by the federal government of the United States because of its potential for abuse. Examples of commonly prescribed controlled substances include Oxycodone, Vicodin, amphetamines, Valium, and Ritalin.

### **4. What should I do with my narcotics (controlled substances)?**

Certain locations listed above will accept controlled substances. To prevent contaminating our water supply or the environment, do not flush medications down the drain.