



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) medications and prescription (legend) medications. Included within prescription drugs 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?

Pharmaceuticals enter the water when they are flushed down toilets and sinks, put into the garbage, or when humans and animals pass drugs through their bodies. Scientists are beginning to find chemicals from pharmaceuticals in almost every sample taken from surface water, effluent, and drinking water in the US and Canada. Making sure that medicines are properly disposed of helps minimize this contamination.

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 medications to a participating pharmacy <http://www.medicinereturn.com/> in the Unwanted Medicine Return Program. Currently, Group Health Cooperative is the only participating pharmacy in Kitsap County. You can take your medications to the following locations:

10452 Silverdale Way NW Silverdale, Wa 360-307-7410	Monday-Friday 8:30am-11pm Saturday, Sundays, holidays 11am-7pm (Closed for lunch Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, 3:30-4pm)
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1400 Pottery Ave. Port Orchard, WA 98366 360-895-5000	Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
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19379 7th Ave NE Poulsbo, WA 98370 360-394-1011	Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
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3. If I don't have a nearby pharmacy that I can take my drugs to, what should I do?

Safe and proper disposal methods are currently not available to the consumer or family due to regulatory and financial barriers for take-back programs in the US. Therefore, people must use the avenues of disposal available to them.

For chemotherapy drugs, contact your prescribing medical office to see if they will accept the drug. For all other drugs, we recommend that you:

1. Keep the medication in its original container.

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Solid and Hazardous Waste Program

Fact Sheet:

Medicine Waste: Pharmaceuticals Disposal Update

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2. Modify the medications to discourage consumption. Add a small amount of water to pills or capsules to dissolve them or place in concrete, kitty litter or other inert substance.
3. Seal and conceal. Tape the container lid shut with tape, place in a sealable bag, then place in a non-transparent container to ensure that the contents cannot be seen.
4. Discard. Options for proper disposal are not widely available at this time in Kitsap County. The Health Districts suggests that you discard the container into the garbage away from kids or pets. Do not place in the recycling bin.

4. What are controlled Substances?

A controlled substance is a drug or chemical substance whose possession and use are regulated under the Controlled Substances Act. The Controlled Substances Act (CSA) is the legal basis by which the manufacture, importation, possession, and distribution of certain drugs are regulated by the federal government of the United States. The legislation created five Schedules (classifications), with varying qualifications for a drug to be included in each. Which Schedule a drug is assigned to depends upon its potential for abuse, its accepted medical use in the United States, and the potential for addiction.

5. What should I do with my narcotics (controlled substances)?

Currently the Drug Enforcement Administration's Controlled Substance Act does not allow the exchange of controlled substances from an end-user to any other individual or pharmacy. The Drug Enforcement Administration is aware of the issues and considering new approaches. We recommend that you place any narcotic (controlled substance) into a sealable plastic bag and place it in another opaque (dark plastic) bag and wrap it in tape, then place it into the garbage away from kids or pets. To prevent contaminating our water supply or the environment, do not flush medications down the drain.

6. Are medicines really hazardous waste?

Many pharmaceuticals have ingredients with characteristics that cause them to 'designate' as hazardous waste when disposed. To designate means to either be a federally regulated (under RCRA - Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) or state regulated hazardous waste (under the Dangerous Waste Regulations WAC 173-303). Federally regulated hazardous wastes include lists of certain discarded chemical products or manufacturing/industrial processes or wastes with hazardous characteristics (ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity or toxicity). Washington State has additional criteria for toxicity and persistence that make some pharmaceuticals 'designate.'

Questions about medicine disposal? Call the Kitsap County Health District at (360) 337-5235.