

Proper Disposal of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medicines

What medicines need proper disposal?

Proper disposal should be used for all medicines (for both humans and animals) obtained by a prescription. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines in pill, liquid or transdermal patch form.

Why do medicines need proper disposal?

- Medications that are flushed or poured down the drain have found their way into our nation's lakes, rivers and streams. Most water treatment plants or septic tanks have not been designed to remove the chemicals contained in medications. There is limited information available on the potential health effects to humans, animals or aquatic ecosystems if large amounts of these chemicals get into the nation's water supply.
- Medications that are thrown away in their original containers or in their original format can be attractive to prescription drug dealers and addicts. Similarly, they might be attractive to children and youth and could easily cause a health problem if used by someone other than the intended user.

Disposal Guidelines

Prescription medications *should not* be flushed down the toilet or poured down the drain. To properly dispose of prescription medications, use the following guidelines:

- **Take unused, unneeded or expired prescription and over-the-counter drugs out of their original containers.**
- **Mix the prescription drugs with an undesirable substance (for example, used kitty litter, coffee grounds, bacon fat, soil), place the mixture into a sealable plastic bag or container, and place it into the trash.**
- **When discarding a transdermal patch, fold the patch into itself and then place it in the undesirable mixture.**

More information about prescription drugs is located on the Vermont Department of Health website: <http://healthvermont.gov/adap/adap.aspx>. Information about the environment and hazardous waste can be found on the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation website: <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/dec.htm>. More information about animal health is located on the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association website: <http://www.vtvets.org/>.



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