

Pharmaceutical Waste



Expired or unwanted non-narcotic prescription and over-the-counter medications from households have traditionally been disposed of by flushing them down the toilet or a drain. This is not recommended due to the possibility of surface and ground water contamination.



Recommended Disposal Method for Non-narcotic Prescriptions

1. Keep expired medication in original container and place in an unmarked container (e.g. old yogurt container with a lid).



2. Modify the medications to discourage consumption. For solid medications, such as pills or capsules: add a small amount of water to partially dissolve them. For liquid medications: add table salt or flour to make a mixture that discourages anyone from drinking them. For blister packs: wrap the packages containing pills in multiple layers of duct or other opaque tape.

3. Seal and conceal.

Tape the medication container lid shut with packing or duct tape to ensure that the contents cannot be seen. Do not conceal medicines in food products because they could be consumed by wild-life scavengers.

4. After modifying medications properly, they can be discarded in the trash and sent to the landfill.

Do Not Place in Recycling Bins!



Where Can I Find More Information?

Ask your health care provider or local pharmacist if your prescriptions are non-narcotic and if they can dispose of them or know of safe disposal programs near you or contact the Solid Waste Education Office at (563) 588-7933. This information has been provided by the Bi-County Medical Waste Disposal Task Force.