

Pharmaceutical Waste Disposal

To reduce potential sources of environmental contamination, the Monroe County Department of Environmental Services organizes pharmaceutical waste collections to provide our residents with a safe and proper way to dispose of their unused or unwanted medications. This service is free of charge to Monroe County residents.

Pharmaceuticals include, but are not limited to, prescription and over the counter medications, veterinary medications and nutritional supplements.

How can you properly dispose of Pharmaceutical Waste?

Call (585) 753-7600, Option 3 or visit

<http://www.monroecounty.gov/hhw/appointments> for available drop off dates and locations.

Who may participate?

Participates with ONLY household medications.

Doctor offices, veterinary offices and pharmacies are not covered under this current program.

Please keep your medications in its original container. You may cross off your name (and PERSONAL information ONLY), please DO NOT cover up or remove the name or the dosage of the medication. All medications and their containers will be incinerated under law enforcement supervision.

You CAN Bring: Prescription and over-the-counter medications, ointments, sprays, inhalers, creams, vials and pet medications.

You CANNOT Bring: Illegal drugs, household hazardous waste (paint, pesticides, oil, gas).

Never Flush or Dispose of Unwanted Medications in the Trash

According to research done by the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) in 2006, the average number of prescriptions per person per year increased from 7.9 in 1994 to 12.5 in 2005. Often older or chronically ill Americans have many more. After the death of a parent or loved one, surviving family members are left with large amounts of powerful and potentially dangerous narcotics. Until recently in New York State, there has not been any easy way to dispose of unwanted, unneeded or expired over the counter and prescribed medications.

Accidental overdose or the misuse of prescription medications has become a significant problem. Older adults may make simple identification mistakes or decide to use a medication previously prescribed for another medical condition.

Prescription narcotic abuse has become an epidemic among adolescents. The source of those medications is typically their parents' or grandparents bathroom cabinets.

There has also been a growing concern regarding trace amounts of pharmaceuticals found in some drinking water sources within the United States. Scientists have been watching the feminization of fish increase and hypothesize the presence of hormones flushed into watersheds as a possible explanation.

Current, federal law prohibits the return of controlled substances to a pharmacy. Similarly, over the counter and non controlled substances are not normally accepted for disposal by pharmacies. The result is an increasing stockpile of unwanted medications in homes all across the country.

Why is pharmaceutical waste an issue?

The U.S. Geological Survey ([USGS](#)) reported that pharmaceuticals such as steroids, prescription and nonprescription medications, antibiotics and hormones, have been detected in the nation's streams, rivers and lakes. Studies have shown that pharmaceuticals are present in water bodies around the US but more research is needed to determine the extent of ecological harm and the impact that it may have on human health. Although the concentrations are low, their effect could be potentially harmful to aquatic and human life.

Why is flushing medications bad for the environment?

In the past, flushing down the drain was considered a proper way to dispose of unwanted medication. Due to increasing awareness, this method is no longer recommended. Medications flushed down the drain can contaminate our water bodies and have adverse effects on our environment. Wastewater treatment facilities are not currently designed to remove these contaminants from their effluent (wastewater discharged after treatment).

Why is throwing medications in the trash bad for the environment?

Throwing medications in the trash is also discouraged. It can lead to accidental swallowing by children or pets or could lead to misuse and or abuse. When disposed of in the trash, these chemicals can contaminate the leachate (water that comes in contact with trash) from the landfill.

This collection program has been made possible by the following organizations:

Monroe County Department of Environmental Services
Monroe County Sheriffs Office
New York State Police
New York State Department of Health
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Covanta Niagara
Ruth A. Lawrence Poison and Drug Information Center
Monroe County Water Authority
Center for Environmental Information

For more information:

Finger Lakes Poison and Drug Information Center:

<http://www.fingerlakespoison.org/>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Pharmaceutical and Personal Care
Product: <http://www.epa.gov/ppcp/>

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) - Proper
Disposal of Household Prescriptions and Over-the-counter Drugs:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/45083.html>

What Department of Environmental Conservation and Others are Doing to Reduce
Drugs in Surface Waters: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/45118.html>