



Poison Prevention

Newsletter

September 2014

UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY • 750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

Guidelines for Drug Disposal

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) developed the following consumer guidance for proper disposal of prescription drugs.

- Follow disposal instructions on the drug label or patient information that accompanies the medication. Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet unless this information specifically instructs you to do so.
- Take advantage of community drug take-back programs that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal.
- If no instructions are given on the drug label and no take-back program is available in your area, throw the drugs in the household trash, but first:
 - Take them out of their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter. The medication will be less appealing to children and pets, and unrecognizable to people who may intentionally go through your trash.

Continued on page 3

Drug Take Back

“Overdoses involving prescription painkillers are at epidemic levels”

Dr. Tom Frieden, Director of the Center for Disease and Prevention (CDC)

Sept. 7, 2014

As a major step in response to our nation’s drug epidemic the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) announced this week that consumers are now allowed to return their unused prescription medications, including opioid painkillers, to pharmacies.



According to a 2014 Partnership for Drug-Free Kids study, 70% of teenagers who used drugs “got them” from a friend or family member. Therefore one goal of this new program is to reduce the number of unwanted, unnecessary, outdated medicines, limiting availability and accessibility within the home. The new regulation, which is slated to go into effect in October 2014, covers controlled substances such as opioid painkillers, stimulants and depressants.

Until now, consumers have had limited options for the disposal of controlled substances. The Controlled Substances Act allowed disposal of these drugs by: flushing or adding kitty litter or other adulterant before disposing in trash; or by handing them in to law enforcement agencies, generally at DEA Take Back events or at kiosks set up at law enforcement facilities. In four years these events have removed from circulation 4.1 million pounds of prescription medications. However, unused portions of drugs could not be returned to pharmacies.

In the past, the Environmental Protection Agency has encouraged flushing controlled substances, especially prescriptions that could possibly kill a child or pet with a single dose. This still remains as an option for consumers. However, as with disposing of these medications in the trash, there are environmental concerns.

“This is such great news for the community, the state and the nation”, said Gail Banach, Director of Public Education and Communications at the Upstate New York Poison Center. **“There has been a dramatic increase in the number**

Continued on page 2



Calling All Grandparents: Is Your Home Safe from Poisoning?

Throughout the month of September, in the weeks surrounding Grandparents Day on September 7, the **Up and Away and Out of Sight** campaign of the CDC's PROTECT initiative, reminds grandparents, parents and families that safe medicine storage is essential in protecting children from poisoning. As a proud member of PROTECT, The Upstate New York Poison Center provides the following information for grandparents.

- Medicine poisoning affects a child every 8 minutes.
- Toddlers are commonly involved in a poisoning as they explore their environment.
- Over 60,000 children visit Emergency Departments after getting into medicine left within their reach.
- A poisoning often occurs shortly after a child has been given that medicine.
- A Safe Kids report found that 1 in 8 grandparents provide regular care for a grandchild. Yet more grandparents identified **electrical outlets** than **medicine** as a top safety issue, even though children are 36 times more likely to go to the Emergency Department for medicine poisoning.

Don't let your grandchild be a poisoning statistic. This Grandparents Day, keep your children safe by putting medicine up and away from curious hands and out of sight of small children.

Take time to be sure top are on securely after every use.

Let's celebrate Grandparents Day! Make sure your home is always poison safe?

For more educational information and newsletters containing many poison safety tips, visit our website (www.upstatepoison.org)

Be sure to visit the Ups and Away Campaign www.upandaway.org for more helpful tips.

Drug Take Back

Continued from page 1

of deaths involving opioids over the past several years, due in part to the increase in the number of prescriptions written, increasing availability and thereby easy access to dangerous drugs. This will allow community members to properly dispose of their medications on a regular basis."

The new disposal program will be voluntary. Pharmacies may choose to register with the drug agency to take back controlled substances or to receive leftovers through the mail.

Whether it will be communities, pharmacies, insurance programs, patients or pharmaceutical companies who must pay for disposal costs is not addressed in the new rule. Until further clarification, there may be limited participation by pharmacies.

However, convincing the public of the importance of disposing of unwanted, unused medication is essential. "In light of this public health crisis we face," says Banach, "our communities must come together to spread the word. If drugs are available in the home, they are accessible to anyone who visits, all adding to the problem."

The Upstate New York Poison Center recommends getting rid of all unwanted, unused meds as quickly as possible after use to reduce the risk of drug abuse, misuse or even accidental poisoning.

The next DEA Drug Take Back Day is scheduled for September 27, 2104 from 10am to 2pm. Visit the DEA website to find your closest location to dispose of your unwanted medications.

http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/

- Put them in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container to prevent the medication from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.

Some additional tips:

- Before throwing out a medicine container, scratch out all identifying information on the label. This will help protect your identity and privacy.
- Do not give medications to friends. Doctors prescribe drugs based on a person's specific symptoms and medical history. A drug that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.
- When in doubt about proper disposal, talk to your pharmacist.

Why the Precautions?

When a drug contains instructions to flush it down the toilet it's because the FDA, working with the manufacturer, has determined this method to be the most appropriate route of disposal that presents the least risk to safety.

"Drugs such as powerful narcotic pain relievers and other controlled substances carry instructions for flushing to reduce the danger of unintentional use or overdose and illegal abuse", says Capt. Jim Hunter, R.Ph., M.P.H., senior program manager on FDA's Controlled Substance Staff.

"For example, the fentanyl patch, an adhesive patch that delivers a potent pain medicine through the skin, comes with instructions to flush used or leftover patches. Too much fentanyl can cause severe breathing problems and lead to death in babies, children, pets, and even adults, especially those who have not been prescribed the drug. Even after a patch is used, a lot of the drug remains in the patch," says Hunter "so you wouldn't want to throw something in the trash that contains a powerful and potentially dangerous narcotic that could harm others'.

Environmental Concerns

Despite the safety reasons for flushing drugs, some people question the practice because of concerns about drug residues found in rivers and lakes, and in some community drinking water. However, the main way drug residues enter water systems is by people taking medications and then naturally passing them through their bodies, says Raanan Bloom, Ph.D., an environmental assessment expert at the FDA. "Most drugs are not completely used by the body, and enter the environment after passing through waste water treatment plants." A company that wants FDA to approve its drug must submit information including how the drug's use would affect the environment. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, scientists to date have found no evidence of adverse human health effects from pharmaceutical residues in the environment. Nonetheless, FDA does not want to add drug residues into water systems unnecessarily.

The continuously revised listing can be found at FDA's Web page (www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm).

Another environmental concern lies with inhalers used by people who have asthma or other breathing problems, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Traditionally, many inhalers have contained chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's), a propellant that damages the protective ozone layer.

The CFC inhalers are being phased out and replaced with more environmentally friendly inhalers. Depending on the type of product and where you live, inhalers and aerosol products may be thrown into household trash or recyclables, or may be considered hazardous waste and require special handling. Read the handling instructions on the label, as some inhalers should not be punctured or thrown into a fire or incinerator. To ensure safe disposal, contact your local trash and recycling facility.

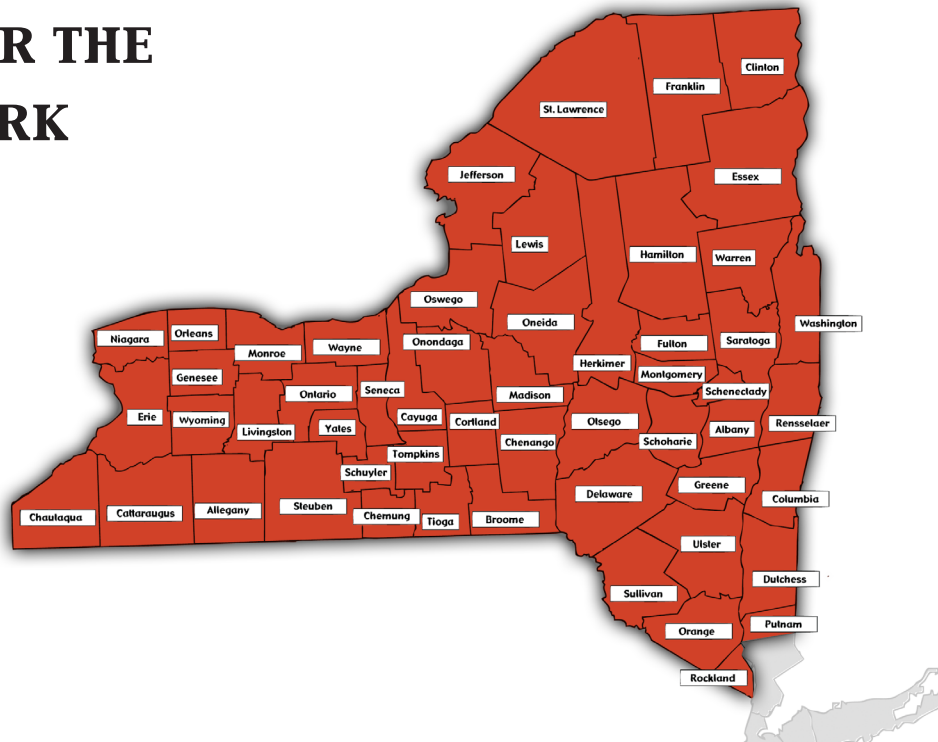
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SERVICE AREA FOR THE UPSTATE NEW YORK POISON CENTER



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Unintentional Poisoning Can Happen To You...At Any Age!

Please visit our website at www.upstatepoison.org for a more poison resources, including brochures, posters, archived newsletters and...



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