

Disposal of Pharmaceuticals

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There are problems with the disposal of medicines due to the issues of environmental contamination. So how should such things be disposed?

Pharmaceuticals can end up in the environment, which might include drinking water. There is concern it may affect aquatic life or have other long-term effects in the drinking water. There is the concern that bacteria will develop resistance to antibiotics due to low levels in the environment.

Wastewater treatment plants are not good at removing pharmaceuticals.

Medicines can certainly damage the operation of septic tanks.

Dumping medications down the toilet or sink is the least desirable method of disposal!!

The following are the recommendations for proper disposal:

Return to the pharmacy if possible. Some take them for proper disposal, usually by incineration at special incineration facilities. But many will not take any or only certain ones.

Some hazardous waste collection centers accept them. *The Guthrie County Transfer Station and household hazardous materials program do NOT accept pharmaceuticals.*

Medicines used in a hospice program might be disposed of by the hospice in some cases.

Disposal in the trash is the most reasonable and easiest disposal method:

1. Remove names and other information from the container.
2. Water down or grind up the medicine. Mix with kitty litter, coffee grounds, cleaning powder, etc. to make it unusable.
3. Put the material into a jar, plastic bag, etc.
4. Put out in the regular household trash.

These are the recommendations of the Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center. For questions or information on poisons, etc. the Hotline number is 1-800-222-1222 (Iowa only) or 712-277-2222. A good website is available through the Iowa Pharmacy Association at www.iarx.org/takeaway. At that site you can find the closest drugstore that will take medications and which things they will and will not accept.