

Professionally and Compassionately Helping People

Disposing of Prescription Meds Properly

Kent, Wash. - January 23, 2015- Unused and no longer used prescription medications can pose a hazard to people, pets, and the environment if not disposed of properly.

About 30% of prescription and over-the-counter medications go unused. Keeping them in the home increases the chance of accidental or intentional use by someone other than the person the medications were originally for.

Every month people stop by fire and police stations trying to do the right thing and dispose of unwanted or unneeded medications so that they do not fall into the hands of children, pets, illegal drug users, or into our waterways. Unfortunately, most local police and fire departments do not accept drugs for disposal.

There are solutions available, however, here in the greater Puget Sound area. **You can:**

1. Remove the medication from the prescription bottle, mix it with coffee grounds or kitty litter in a zip-lock baggy, and dispose of it in the garbage. Mixing drugs with other substances reduces the likelihood of anyone finding the drugs and misusing them.
2. Find a location that accepts unwanted medications. King County Public Health recommends that you go to www.takebackyourmeds.org to find the most convenient drop-off location.
3. Watch for national or local "take-back" days for medications.

When disposing of medications, **do not:**

1. Flush down the toilet. Medications that enter the water supply can poison plants, people, and animals.
2. Put in the trash without "disguising" it (see above).
3. Dispose of medications in the original prescription bottle. Bottles often have sensitive personal information on them.
4. Crush pills to disguise them. Crushing pills can release dust that exposes everyone to the medication.

Fast fact: Labrador retrievers are the dog most likely to get into things they shouldn't. Last year nearly 14,000 calls to the Animal Poison Control Center were from worried lab owners. The most common toxins they got into were human medicines.

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