



Disposing of Pharmaceutical Waste

At this time the District of Columbia does not have a disposal policy for non-hazardous pharmaceuticals. We offer the following guidance:

Do not flush medications down the sink or toilet.

Expired or unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medications from households are typically disposed of by flushing them down the toilet or a drain. Although this method of disposal prevents immediate accidental ingestion, it can cause contamination in our aquatic environment because wastewater treatment systems, including septic tanks, are not designed to remove many of these medications.

You should never flush unwanted medications down the toilet or down a drain. Instead, place them in the household trash after taking the following precautions to prevent accidental ingestion by humans or animals:

- Keep in the original container. This will help identify the contents if they are accidentally ingested.
- Mark out your name and prescription number for safety.
- For pills: add some water or soda to start dissolving them.
- For liquids: add something inedible like cat litter or dirt.
- Close the lid and secure with duct or packing tape.
- Place the bottle(s) inside an opaque (non see-through) container like a detergent container.
- Tape that container closed.
- Hide the container in the trash. Do not put it in the recycle bin.

DO NOT give drugs to anyone else

DO NOT flush drugs down the toilet.

DO NOT put drugs in the trash without disguising them – human or animal scavengers may find them and misuse them.

If you have additional questions, please call the Hazardous Waste Branch, DDOE, at (202) 481-3838.