



Fact Sheet

MEDICATIONS DISPOSAL

Environmental Hazards from Medications in Groundwater

During the past decade there have been growing questions about potential adverse effects from the environmental release of pharmaceutically active compounds (prescription drugs). Small concentrations of hormones, antidepressants, antibiotics, and chemicals from personal care products have been found in various waterways nationwide, including Tucson, according to reports from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).²

Medications can make their way through our sewer system and wastewater treatment facilities into our groundwater. This can happen when individuals flush unused prescription medications down sinks or toilets. Since the wastewater treatment process was not designed to remove medications from the waste stream, traces of medications may remain present when treated wastewater is returned to the environment. In Tucson and Pima County, treated wastewater is delivered to parks and golf courses for irrigation, and eventually these substances can pollute surface water and groundwater supplies.

Because prescription medications pose significant hazards to public health and safety and the environment, they should be disposed of in a responsible manner.

Steps to Dispose of Medications^{1, 3, 4}

- **DO NOT FLUSH OR POUR** prescription drugs, other medications, or tablets down a toilet, sink, or drain (see sidebar).
- **BE PROACTIVE AND SAFELY DISPOSE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS, MEDICATIONS, AND TABLETS IN HOUSEHOLD TRASH.** Take unused, unneeded or expired prescription drugs, other medications, or tablets out of their original container and throw them in the trash. This follows federal guidelines promulgated by the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy, is acceptable to both the City's and County's solid waste management departments, and protects our water supply.

When discarding unused medications, ensure you protect children and pets from potentially negative effects.

If you wish, you can do some or all of the following before you throw prescription drugs, other medications, or tablets in the trash:

- Place them into a sealable plastic bag or other impermeable, non-descript container, such as an empty can.
- If the medication is a solid (pill, liquid capsule, etc.), crush it or add water to the container to dissolve the medication.

Mix the medications or tablets with kitty litter, sawdust, or coffee grounds (or any undesirable substance).

¹Smart disposal, A National Public Awareness and partnership Campaign, Promoting Responsible Consumer Medication Disposal to Ensure Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems; <http://www.smartdisposal.net>.

²Report on the San Francisco Bay Area's Safe Medicine Disposal Days, organized by the Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group, August 2006.

³Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Prescription Drug Disposal...A Pain in the Drain; <http://www.azdeq.gov>.

⁴Proper Disposal of Prescription Drugs, Federal Guidelines, Office of National Drug Control Policy, ONDCP, Washington, D.C., February 2007; www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov.

Common household and automotive products become a hazard to the environment when disposed of improperly. Leftover quantities of these products should never be poured down the drain, put in the trash, or stored for excessive periods of time.



Are you one of the 35,000 residents in our community who bring their household hazardous wastes to our collection sites for safe disposal?

**Everybody should do it –
its free, easy and convenient!**

Please Bring

- Automotive Fluids
- Engine Oil Filters
- Auto Batteries
- Rechargeable Batteries (Ni-Cd, Ni-MH, Pb)
- Small Button Batteries
- Lithium Batteries
- Cleaning Products
- Drain Openers
- Cooking Oil
- Mercury Containing Products
- Fluorescent Lamps
- Paint Products
- Solvents
- Hobby Chemicals
- Pesticides
- Lawn & Garden Products
- Pool Chemicals
- Propane Cylinders
- Computer Equipment
- Printer Cartridges
- Items Labeled: Acid, Flammable, Caustic, Poison, Caution, Toxic, Danger or Warning

Do Not Bring

- Business or Commercial Wastes
- Commercial Gas Cylinders
- Explosives or Ammunition
- Infectious and Radioactive Wastes
- Medications (prescription drugs, other medications or tablets)

Please deliver wastes only during hours of operation. All wastes should be properly identified and labeled. Containers should not leak.



Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Sites

Main Site

Open every Friday & Saturday 8 A.M. to 12 NOON

- 2440 W. Sweetwater Drive

Outreach Sites

Open the first Saturday of each month 8 A.M. to 12 NOON

- Eastside City Hall
7575 E. Speedway Blvd.
- Tucson Water Plant 2
1102 W. Irvington Road
- Pusch Ridge Christian Church
440 W. Calle Concordia

ABOP Sites

(Antifreeze, Batteries, Oil, and Paint)

Open during Landfill and Transfer Station hours

- Los Reales Landfill
5300 E. Los Reales Rd.
- Sahuarita Landfill
16605 S. La Cañada Dr.
- Tangerine Road Landfill
10220 W. Tangerine Rd.
- Catalina Transfer Station
14425 N. Oracle Rd.
- Ryan Field Transfer Station
6455 S. Continental Rd.