

Fact Sheet Medication Disposal & Water Quality



Keeping Drugs Out of Our Waterways

How Unused Drugs Enter Our Waterways

There are a number of ways that drugs can enter our waterways:

- Direct discharge by a pharmaceutical company;
- Runoff of animal waste from an agricultural facility;
- Human excretion of medications that have not been metabolized by the body;
- Contaminated landfill;
- Disposal down drains and toilets.

Doesn't Wastewater Treatment Get Rid of Drugs?

- Wastewater treatment facilities and/or septic systems are not meant to address complex chemicals;
- Some pharmaceuticals can get through systems untreated and end up in water sources;
- Freshwater streams in particular are at risk because they have less ability to dilute contaminants than larger bodies of water.

Who and What is at Risk?

Unintentional exposure to drugs may occur in humans who drink contaminated water; eat contaminated fish; eat crop produce that may have been treated with contaminated water; or bathe or swim in contaminated waters.

Some pharmaceuticals accumulate in the tissues of aquatic species. Bioaccumulation and interference with the food chain may cause serious implications in the ecosystems that depend on them.

So What Can You Do?

Resources for the Safe Disposal of Expired, Unwanted & Unused Medications

- National Prescription Drug Take Back Day 4/28/18: https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/
- New York State DEC Drug Take Back Program: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/67720.html>
- Nearby Disposal Locations:
 - Nassau Pharmacy, Nassau
 - CVS, East Greenbush
 - Young's Pharmacy, Averill Park
 - Mohawk Pharmacy, Troy



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