

Community Partners for Clean Streams Monthly eMonitor



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Janis A. Bobrin, Drain Commissioner*

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Up Front

The eMonitor is designed to keep our Partners and friends updated on CPCS, stormwater management issues, provide helpful information to reduce stormwater and nonpoint source pollution, recognize new Partners, highlight upcoming events, and create networking opportunities. We hope you enjoy each edition of the Monthly eMonitor and welcome any comments, concerns, or suggestions.

Prescription Drug and Personal Care Product Disposal

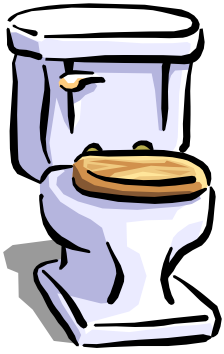
A United States Geological Survey study found that 80% of the watersheds they sampled contained at least one type of chemical from a pharmaceutical, while half of the waterways contained seven or more. It is unclear what effect these chemicals have on wildlife or humans. However, it has been shown that increased levels of antibiotics have created drug-resistant bacteria.



The sources of these chemicals include wastewater from sewage treatment plants, septic systems and animal feedlots. Most treatment plants and systems are not designed to remove chemicals such as those from Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products (PPCPs) from the wastewater. According to the Center for Disease Control, 46% of Americans use at least one prescription drug daily, and receive an average of 11 prescriptions annually. In 2001, there were an estimated total of 3.1 billion prescriptions given to Americans alone. These chemicals are making their way into the environment and Washtenaw County's waterways.

Much of the contamination is due to human waste, but a significant portion is also attributed to the improper disposal of Prescription Drug and Personal Care Products. Large quantities of PPCPs are often flushed down the drain at one time. Septic systems are particularly sensitive to PPCPs because they can damage or kill the bacteria used to break down wastes.

Stormwater Pollution Prevention Tip of the Month



Don't rush to flush!

Ever wonder what to do with that leftover prescription from five years ago or the over the counter cough medicine from 1982? In the past, the common method of disposal was to flush excess drugs and personal care products down the drain. To protect human health and the environment, this is no longer the best practice. Although there is no national standard for disposing of PPCPs, the generally accepted methods that will protect the environment and human health are outlined below.

If you do have leftover, expired or mystery products to dispose of, the following guidelines are the current best method of disposal.

Always follow your physician's instructions. Finish your prescription if instructed to do so. It is important to protect your family, pets and other animals from accidental ingestion, so ensure the packages outlined below are sealed tightly to prevent leaks and breakage.

Before you dispose of your PPCPs:

- Check with your local pharmacy first to see if they have a "take back" program for prescription drugs. A small number of pharmacies offer a limited service. No pharmacies can accept controlled substances.
- Obscure any personal information on the package, but be sure the name of the product is visible for safety purposes.

Capsules and Tablets in Containers

- Secure the cap on the bottle.
- Cover the top with duct tape.
- Double wrap the sealed containers in opaque plastic bags, tie securely and place in the trash



Blister-Packaged Capsules and Tablets

- Wrap packages with duct tape.
- Double bag in opaque plastic bags to prevent leakage and place in the trash.



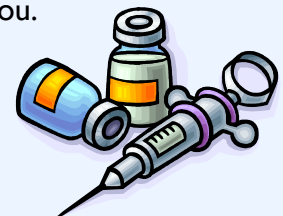
Liquid PPCPs

- Seal the container with duct tape.
- Double bag the container in opaque plastic bags and place in the trash. Be sure the bag is carefully sealed to prevent leakage.
- For further precautions, add salt, a pungent spice such as nutmeg or mustard, or a bitter tasting additive to the liquid. Kitty litter, sawdust or an absorbing agent can also be added to repel animals. Then, seal in a double bag and place in the trash.



Ampules, Vials and Needles

- Do not open or alter the contents if possible.
- Call the Washtenaw County 24 hour home toxins hotline (734) 222-3950 for information and drop off hours at 705 N. Zeeb Road. Also check the Turning Trash to Treasure guide on www.ewashtenaw.org for pharmacy drop off locations near you.



CPCS News

Homeowner's Guide #9 Now Available!

The Homeowners Guide has a new addition. Guide No. 9: Prescription Drug and Personal Care Products Disposal is now available! Learn more about PPCPs and what you can do to help Washtenaw County's waterways.

Please contact us if you would like a copy of Guide #9 or further information about this subject. All new issues of the Homeowner's Guide will have this fact sheet included.

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Prescription Drug and Personal Care Product Disposal
Guide No. 9

Why be concerned?
Increasing amounts of prescription drugs and personal care products (PPCPs) are being detected in U.S. rivers, waterways, and groundwater. Wastewater treatment facilities are not equipped to filter out these chemicals, so drugs like cholesterol reducers, blood pressure medication, sleeping pills, hypnotics, hormone replacement therapy, and antibiotics are being detected in drinking water supplies. These medications endanger aquatic life in waterways all across the country. The risk to humans and animals of long-term exposure to these contaminants in drinking water is unknown.

Source of the Problem
The United States Geological Survey found that 90% of the watersheds they sampled routinely contained at least one type of pharmaceutical chemical, with half of the streams containing seven or more. While most of the effects of these products are unknown, increased concentrations of antibiotics have produced "super bugs," bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.

Human excretion is responsible for the majority of pharmaceutical pollution in our waterways. Animal feedlots also release antibiotics from waste outflows after storms. Antibiotics from cleaning products end up in local streams as well. However, a significant portion of the pollution is a result of the improper disposal of unused drugs and personal care products.

Previous information campaigns encouraged consumers to "flush" excess pharmaceuticals because of the potential harm they posed to children when left in the home or placed in household trash.

In the United States there is no national guidance for the proper disposal of PPCPs. However, there are measures you can take at home to prevent the contamination of waterways from unused medications and personal care products.

ARE THESE ONLY ENVIRONMENT?
WHAT HAS IT BECOME? TAKING THEM FIRST!

This guide was prepared by the Office of Washtenaw County's Drain Commissioner, Janet A. Bohm with the assistance of the Washtenaw County Home Toxic Reduction Program. Information sources include ENS Fact Sheet #427-02 and an MSDC report. Original graphics by David Ziem.

