Safe Disposal of Unwanted Household Medicines

September 2010

The Need for Secure, Convenient and Sustainable Medicine Return Opportunities is Great

- Storing unneeded veterinary and other medicines in our homes can increase the risk of accidental poisoning
  - Since 2004 unintentional poisoning deaths have outpaced motor vehicle crashes as the number one cause of unintentional injury death in Snohomish County–80% of those poisoning deaths were due to opioid pain relievers.
- Prescription drug abuse is a serious and growing problem in our communities
  - Almost 11% of 10th graders reported using pain relievers to get "high" in the past 30 days; Washington State data indicates that young adults (18-29 years) accounted for two-thirds of all admissions to substance abuse treatment centers for prescription pain reliever abuse in 2007.
- Disposing of unneeded medicines via flushing or trash disposal is not the solution
  - Wastewater and septic systems are not designed to treat or remove these chemicals; pharmaceuticals have been detected in surface, groundwater and drinking water supplies.
  - Most waste medicines designate as either federally- or state-regulated hazardous waste. Snohomish County ordinances prohibit the disposal of waste medicines into the solid waste system. Also, meds in garbage can be picked up by children, pets, wildlife or anyone who rummages through the trash.

Options for Collection and Disposal of Household Medications

- Snohomish County now has more options for proper disposal of veterinary and other meds than nearly anywhere else in the U.S. Snohomish County's 28 law enforcement-based sites accept controlled substances and other medications. These sites provide a "back-up" to pharmacy-based programs [such as the Group Health and Bartell Drug locations, or the mail-back program offered by the National Community Pharmacy Association (www.disposemymeds.org) for its members]. Currently, pharmacy-based programs can only take back non-controlled medications. However, in the long run additional convenient locations are needed that can accept all meds, as well as sustained funding to support law enforcement- and pharmacy-based programs.
- On the federal level, Rep. Jay Inslee (WA-01) has authored legislation, H.R. 5809, that would amend the Controlled Substances Act of 1970 to allow residents more options to return their medicines for safe disposal. More information on Rep. Inslee's legislation is available by contacting Maura Little in Rep. Inslee's district office at Maura.Little@mail.house.gov or (206) 361-0233.
- On the state level, legislation has been introduced in recent sessions to establish long-term sustainable funding to support law enforcement- and pharmacy-based programs throughout the state. Similar legislation is expected in the future.

Law enforcement locations accept all meds, including narcotics.

www.medicinereturn.com

How Can You Help?

- Provide proper disposal information to your customers.
- Educate yourself on the issue and what is being done to address this serious problem in our community. Information is available at **www.medicinereturn.com**.
- Join our email list to receive the most current updates. Contact Jonelle Fenton-Wallace at the Snohomish County Partnership for Secure Medicine Disposal at jfw@snoco.org.