

Safe Disposal of Unwanted Household Medicines



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

- Storing unneeded 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.

Options for Collection and Disposal of Household Medications

- Snohomish County now has more options for proper disposal of meds than nearly anywhere else in the U.S. Snohomish County’s 27 law enforcement-based sites accept controlled substances and other medications. These local sites provide a “back-up” to pharmacy-based programs (such as Snohomish County’s Group Health and Bartell Drug locations, or the mail-back programs beginning to be offered by large pharmacy chains). 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, the “Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010” (S. 3397), will allow for changes to the federal Controlled Substances Act. These changes are intended to increase disposal options for controlled substances via convenient, local programs—such as approved pharmacy-based medicine return locations. More information can be found at www.takebackyourmeds.org.
- 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.



How Can You Help?

- Provide proper disposal information to your staff, customers or clients.
- Educate yourself on the issue and what is being done to address this serious problem in our community. Information is available at www.takebackyourmeds.org.
- 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.



www.takebackyourmeds.org