

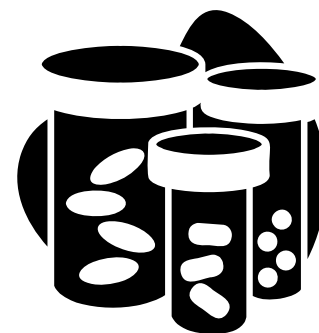
# Disposal of Unwanted or Unused Pharmaceuticals

Recent studies have found traces of painkillers, estrogen, antidepressants, blood-pressure medicines, etc. in water samples from 30 states. Studies have linked hormone exposure to reproductive defects in fish, and environmental exposure to antibiotics to the development of drug-resistant germs.

Various agencies and organizations are working to find convenient and environmentally responsible ways for residents to manage waste pharmaceuticals. These items include over-the-counter and prescription medications, such as pills, liquids, gels, creams, and aerosols. Many pharmaceuticals intended for pets are similar or identical to those prescribed for humans and should be treated exactly the same.

## Don't Flush Your Waste Drugs!

The age-old advice of flushing pharmaceuticals down the toilet is now considered to be the wrong advice. For years many households and businesses have been in the habit of flushing waste pharmaceuticals down the toilet. However, wastewater treatment plants and septic systems are not designed to treat pharmaceutical wastes and traces of these drugs remain in treated wastewater.



## Recommended Handling/Disposal Options for Households

### REDUCE pharmaceutical waste whenever possible.

- Use all antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor. Not using all doses of an antibiotic could lead to development of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria.
- Buy only as much as can reasonably be used before the expiration date. For example, don't buy a bottle with 500 pills just because it's cheaper, unless you will use them all.
- When prescribed a new medication, ask the doctor to prescribe only enough to see if the medication will work for you and in the lowest dose advisable. That way, if the medication doesn't suit you, there is less to waste. Do the same for your pet's medications.

### DISPOSE of the remainder properly.

- **Residents are advised to save all old or unwanted medications for periodic household chemical collection events.** Please note that syringes, needles, inhalers and controlled substances are not accepted at these events. Jackson County Health Dept. has sponsored several of these events over the years. Call 684-3143, ext. 128 for more details. **Note:** If you choose to store your waste while you wait for a collection event to occur, please minimize the risk of accidental poisoning, overdose or diversion by storing medications out of reach of children or in a locked cabinet.
- If a collection program is not available, dispose of your unused pharmaceuticals in the trash, remembering to:
  - Remove or mark over all labels that identify the materials as pharmaceuticals or that could provide personal information about you, including prescription information that someone could try to refill.
  - Render them unattractive to children and thieves by dissolving them in a small amount of water or alcohol, or by grinding them up and mixing them with coffee grounds or kitty litter.
  - Put them in a second container or small plastic bag and hide them in your trash.
  - Never burn pharmaceuticals or personal care products in a burn barrel. Uncontrolled burning can create extremely harmful air pollutants.



**Jackson County Health Department**  
Murphysboro, Illinois  
618/684-3143  
[www.jchdonline.org](http://www.jchdonline.org)



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

# ***Disposal of In-Home Injection Needles***

Each year, approximately 9 million syringe users will administer at least 3 billion injections outside traditional health care facilities. Nearly two-thirds of these "at-home" injectors are people with diabetes or patients administering home health treatment for a wide variety of ailments. Many self-injectors are unaware of safe disposal methods available to them and simply throw their used needles in the trash or flush them down the toilet, posing a risk of injury or potential infection from diseases such as hepatitis B or C and HIV to anyone who encounters them.

In-home injection needles can pose a significant health hazard to those who might be exposed to them, including children and pets in the home, refuse collectors and landfill workers, and public works employees. **NEVER throw loose needles in the trash or flush them down the toilet!**

To reduce the exposure risks from in-home needles, lancets and syringes, we suggest the following methods of disposal:

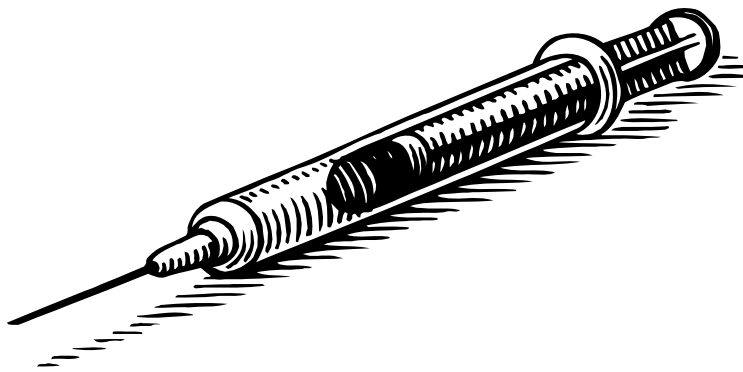
## **Return Programs:**

Home users place used needles in a special "sharps" container and return it to a local collection site or by mail to a facility to be disposed of properly. Jackson County Health Dept. has sharps disposal containers available for purchase by clients. There are two sizes available: small (3"x3"x8") for \$5 & large (6"x9"x10") for \$10. Clients can return full sharps containers to Jackson County Health Dept. for disposal by a licensed medical waste disposal service. Please call 684-3143, ext. 150 for more information on this service.

## **In-Home Individual Disposal Device:**

There are a number of products available for in-home injectors, including devices that snip or retract the needle. All such products should be approved by the FDA.

For more information on mail-back programs and in-home disposal devices, visit [www.safeneedledisposal.org](http://www.safeneedledisposal.org). Your local pharmacist may also carry some of these products or be able to offer needle disposal advice.



**Alternate Disposal Option:** If you do not wish to utilize a mail-back program or in-home disposal device, please follow these guidelines when disposing of in-home needles:

- Place all needles, lancets, & syringes in a sturdy plastic container (such as a laundry detergent bottle) or coffee can.
- Write "Sharps - Do Not Recycle" on the outside of the container.
- Keep the lid on and keep out of reach of children and pets.
- When full, place tape around lid to secure.
- Place container in household trash for pickup by a County-licensed waste hauler for disposal at a permitted landfill.
- Never burn or bury any medical waste, including needles.