



Protect Our Water Supply - Properly Dispose of Prescription Drugs

Unused drugs kept in medicine cabinets, tossed in the garbage, or flushed down the toilet or drain can seriously threaten human and environmental health. Drugs of concern include both prescription and over-the-counter medications.

The Issue

A vast array of pharmaceuticals -- including antibiotics, anti-depressants, and hormones -- have been found in the drinking water of at least **41 million Americans**. The concentrations of these pharmaceuticals are tiny, measured in quantities of parts per billion or trillion, far below the levels of a medical dose. Utilities insist their water is safe. But the presence of many prescription drugs -- as well as over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen and ibuprofen in drinking water -- heightens scientists' concerns about potential long-term consequences to human health.

Drugs commonly found in Portland's water include acetaminophen, caffeine, ibuprofen and sulphamethoxazole (used for acute urinary tract and other infections).

April 30 is Drug Take-Back Day

The best way to dispose of unwanted medications is through a drug take-back program. Drug take-back programs not only reduce medications entering our water supply, they also lessen avoidable poisoning of both children and adults, prevent abuse of unwanted prescription drugs, and protect fish and other aquatic species. Unwanted medications are incinerated instead of ending up in the water supply.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and its local partners will accept expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs on April 30, 2011, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. You can turn in the drugs anonymously, and no questions will be asked. Sharps and medical waste are not accepted.

Take-Back Locations:

- Fred Meyer, 1111 N.E. 102nd Ave.
- Fred Meyer, 7404 N. Interstate Ave.
- Portland Police, 110 N.W. Third Avenue

Learn more and find a take-back site near you.

If you cannot turn in your drugs on April 30, these downtown locations offer ongoing take-back programs (call before you go to find out exactly what they accept):

Apex Pharmacy
1215 NW 23rd Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97210

Paulson's Pharmacy
4246 NE Sandy Blvd
Portland, Oregon 97213

Did You Know?

In the Potomac River, many male bass are producing eggs. Similar "intersex" fish are being found in rivers across the country. While scientists have yet to pinpoint the cause of this gender-defying mutation, they think a group of chemicals affecting key biological processes are responsible. The chemicals are regulated by hormones commonly found in birth control pills. Whatever the cause, it's unknown how these chemicals affect us when we drink or swim in the same waters.

Intersex fish may be an early warning about the effects of pharmaceuticals on the health of our waterways and the people and organisms that depend on them. There are a myriad of pollutants in our waterways, but pharmaceuticals are particularly worrisome since they are designed to alter biological processes, the effects of chronic environmental exposure are poorly understood, and more drugs are consumed and excreted or disposed of every year.

