

# Protect the Environment...



## **PITCH THOSE OLD PILLS!**

HOW TO  
PROPERLY  
DISPOSE OF  
UNWANTED  
MEDICINE



## **What you can do**

In the greater Cleveland Area, we live and work in a watershed that flows to the Great Lakes.

Expired or unwanted over-the-counter and prescription medications from households have typically been disposed of by flushing them down the drain.

Wastewater treatment cannot remove all medicine, and this may harm the Great Lakes.

With YOUR help, local agencies are working to protect the Great Lakes.

## Medicine and the Environment

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One of the most commonly recommended methods of disposing of unwanted medication has been flushing the medicine down the toilet or rinsing it down the drain. Your doctor or pharmacist may even tell you to do so.

**But when medicines are flushed or rinsed down the drain, they flow to your septic tank or to your local wastewater treatment plant, where they can harm the beneficial bacteria that break down wastes.**

Septic tanks and municipal treatment plants are not designed to remove these medicines, so they may pass through the wastewater treatment plant unchanged. When the treated water is released into rivers and lakes, it can still contain these medicines.

Our local agencies are working to keep these medicines out of our wastewater, rivers, and lakes.



## The Safest Option

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Currently, the safest option for disposing of unwanted medicine is to **securely package the medication and put it in the trash, out of reach of children and animals.**

However, simply throwing away medicine can be dangerous. Steps should be taken to make it difficult for any person or animal to unintentionally ingest the discarded medicine.

## Steps to Safe and Proper Disposal of Unwanted Medicine

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If your pharmacy will not accept unwanted medications:

- 1. Keep the medication in its original packaging.** The labels may contain necessary information and the caps are usually childproof.
- 2. Remove all personal information from the packaging.** Use a marker to black out name and insurance information.



- 3. Make the medicine unusable.** Crush or dissolve pills with a small amount of water. Absorb liquid medication with flour, table salt, or another non-toxic substance. Wrap blister packs in layers of strong tape.

- 4. Secure packaging with strong tape.**



- 5. Place the package inside a non-transparent container.** An empty yogurt or margarine container works best.
- 6. Place this container in with your household trash.**



For more information, please contact



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