

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Disposing of Unused or Expired Medications

Patients in possession of expired or unused medications are increasingly concerned about how to dispose of them. Medicines flushed down the toilet make their way into our rivers and some cities restrict what can be thrown in the trash. On the other hand medicines not disposed are a potential accidental overdose waiting to happen. Medicines once dispensed cannot be accepted for return by a pharmacist. Pharmacists can assist patients in choosing disposal options that ensure safety and protect the environment.

Guidelines for disposal are published by the FDA and The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. The 2009 version of the guidelines is available at www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/prescrip_disposal.pdf. Patients are first directed to follow labeled instructions on disposal. These instructions are usually included in the medication information sheets attached to prescriptions. In the event that labeled instructions have been misplaced patients should remove the medication from the container, making sure to destroy any identifying information. Medication patches should be folded in half before disposal, concealing the drug permeable adherent side within the fold. The medicine should then be mixed with an undesirable substance, like dirt, used coffee grounds or spent tea leaves and sealed in a leak free plastic bag and placed in the trash. The idea is to use something that neither humans nor animals will generally recognize or misidentify as food. Only drugs with specific labeled instructions for flushing should be flushed down the toilet.

A list of drugs recommended for flushing is found on the FDA's website...

www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/default.htm. These drugs pose significant risk to children or pets from accidental ingestion. Included; Diazepam, Fentanyl, Hydromorphone, Meperidine, Methadone, Methylphenidate, Morphine Sulfate, and Oxymorphone.

The 2011 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports that 70% of those who abuse pain medications obtain them from family or acquaintances. In order to limit this avenue for drug abuse, the Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010 was passed. The result of this act has been a bi-annual National Drug Take Back Day hosted by the Drug Enforcement Agency along with local law enforcement. The next scheduled Take Back Day will be April 27, 2013 from 10 AM to 2 PM local time. Locations are determined by law enforcement, such as the Parish Sheriff's Office in Louisiana. Patients may contact these agencies directly or ask their pharmacist for information. These days are often published in local newspapers.

For patients with limited access to trash removal or who are taking selected medicines that are not controlled substances but require special handling, many pharmacies now provide special "mail back" drug disposal kits. These kits usually include a bag or box which when filled may be literally mailed to a predetermined hazardous waste company. This type of safe disposal has been available for many years to patients with home injections who require a safe way to dispose of used needles. In order to maintain a safe home environment and prevent medication theft or diversion, patients should discuss the best disposal options for them with their pharmacist.

Resources:

<http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm101653.htm>

http://www.justice.gov/dea/docs/results_final.pdf

http://www.fdalawblog.net/fda_law_blog_hyman_phelps/2010/10/secure-and-responsible-drug-disposal-act-passes-congress.html

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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