

## Oklahoma Pharmacy Drug Takeback Pilot Program sponsored by the Department of Environmental Quality and the Product Stewardship Institute eases disposal of prescription and over-the-counter medications

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STILLWATER — A new pilot program in four Oklahoma communities is helping residents properly dispose of prescription and over-the-counter medications — a move that not only enhances safety in the home, but also is good for the environment.

Oklahoma Pharmacy Drug Takeback Pilot Program is sponsored by the Department of Environmental Quality and the Product Stewardship Institute and will run through June.

Lynn Malley, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension assistant state specialist, solid waste management programs, said this program will help keep medications out of the water system and can even help prevent accidental poisonings in the home.

“All too often, people simply dispose of over-the-counter and prescription medications by throwing them in the trash or flushing them down the toilet,” Malley said. “Both methods allow medications to be released into the environment and contaminate our drinking water supply and harm aquatic life. This program allows people to get rid of medications that are no longer needed in a safe, legal manner. This service is free and no questions are asked.”

Collection receptacles are available at Razook’s Drug at 1518 W. Ninth Ave. in Stillwater, Moore RX at 2018 S. Interstate 35 Service Road in Moore, Family Health Pharmacy at 10021 S. Western Ave. in Oklahoma City and Pawnee Indian Health Center at 1201 Heritage Circle Exit in Pawnee. Additional pharmacies may be added in March.

Acceptable medications include all expired, unused or unwanted controlled, noncontrolled and over-the-counter medications, including pet medications. Liquid medicines, such as cough syrup, must be tightly capped. In addition, the medications do not have to be in the original container. Items that may not be put in the receptacles include regulated medical waste, sharps, syringes, thermometers, hazardous waste, aerosols, illicit drugs or commercial waste.

Another bonus to this program is it can help cut down on the nonmedical use of prescription drugs.

“Prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the United States. Nearly 70 percent of people who begin using prescription drugs nonmedically get them from the medicine cabinet of a family member or friend,” Malley said. “Unused drugs left in the home also put seniors, children and pets at risk of accidental poisoning.”

Courtney Redding, co-owner of Razook’s Drug, said it is common for people to have leftover medications in the home.

“Sometimes people will have medications leftover following an illness. If these people get sick again, they believe they can simply take the same medicine again,” Redding said. “However, that particular medication may not be what they need for the new illness.”

Another scenario in which you may find yourself with an abundance of unwanted medications is following the death of a family member, especially if that person had been ill for some time.

She also pointed out it is a good idea to clean out the medicine cabinet at least once a year. There is a higher chance of accidentally taking the wrong medication if your medicine cabinet is cluttered with old prescriptions and outdated over-the-counter products.

Redding said she has been getting positive feedback from customers who have come in to dispose of old medications.

“People tell us they’re glad we’re doing this and they’re glad to have a place to safely dispose of medications,” she said.

All collection points meet the requirements of the Drug Enforcement Agency’s Controlled Substance Act. In addition, the collection points are compliant with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act regulations.

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