

OBSERVER-DISPATCH

OUR VIEW: Proper disposal of medicine essential

By OBSERVER-DISPATCH

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Despite educational campaigns and constant reminders about proper disposal of old or unwanted medication, there still are many people who believe the best way to get rid of it is simply to flush it down the toilet.

Wrong.

Flushing medication away is probably the worst way to get rid of it. Wastewater treatment plants don't eliminate all of these chemicals, and according to studies, medicines have shown up in rivers and streams, as well as in drinking water supplies. Concentrations may be small, but studies have shown effects on aquatic habitats, fish and wildlife.

Instead, people need to embrace safer, more effective methods of disposal that have been in effect for several years now. And it's about to become even easier.

For a number of years now, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has sponsored "take-back days," affording people an opportunity to bring their old, unused, outdated medications — prescription or otherwise — to various sites for safe disposal. In addition, drop boxes are located at a number of area police departments and several municipal sites where medications can be brought for safe disposal.

Now, some pharmacies are getting into the program. A pilot program by the Product Stewardship Institute and the New York Product Stewardship Council in Oneida and Lewis counties is providing locked collection boxes at several participating pharmacies where people can bring leftover, expired and otherwise unwanted medications. They include U&I Pharmacy in Vernon, Garro's Pharmacy in Utica and Walgreens in Rome. Further, a bill passed by the state Legislature would require all chain pharmacies to start collection programs. It has yet to be signed by the governor.

Meanwhile, the state Department of Environmental Conservation is launching a pilot program at pharmacies, hospitals and long-term care facilities that will cover the cost of purchasing a collection box for medications as well as pickup and destruction costs for two years. So far, 52 pharmacies — most of them independents — have been selected for the program, but applications still are being accepted.

Proper disposal of unwanted medications is just good sense. In addition to protecting the environment, it takes these medications - some of which are addictive - out of circulation, squelching any opportunity for prescription drug abuse, a growing problem.

So do what's best for everybody. Make it a point to collect all your unnecessary or outdated medications and take them to an area location for proper disposal. Do it today.

GETTING RID OF UNWANTED MEDICATIONS

Local pharmacies with take-back programs

- Garro Drugs, 704 Blecker Street, Utica
- U&I Pharmacy, 5236 West Seneca Street, Vernon
- Walgreens, 201 South James St., Rome

Local agencies with drop boxes

- Boonville Police Department, 13149 State Route 12
- Camden Police Department, 30 Fayette Street
- Dolgeville Police Department, 41 North Main St.
- Herkimer Police Department, 120 Green St.
- Ilion Police Department, 55 First Street
- Kirkland Police Department, 2 New Street, Clark Mills
- Oneida County Sheriff's Department, 6065 Judd Rd. Oriskany

- Oriskany Police Department, 708 Utica Street
- Rome Police Department, 301 North James Street
- Sherrill Police Department, 373 Sherrill St.
- *Trenton Municipal Building, 8520 Old Poland Road, Barneveld
- Utica Police Department, 413 Oriskany Street West
- Waterville Municipal Hall, 122 Barton Ave. W.