

Proper Disposal of Pharmaceuticals

In order to protect our environment from the unwanted and unknown consequences of pharmaceutical products passing into surface water systems the Onondaga County Water Authority is urging its customers to practice proper disposal procedures for unused drugs. Flushed medications can pass largely unaltered through wastewater treatment plants, which are not designed for their removal.

In New York State it is the law that Pharmacies, Veterinarians, and other drug retailers post a notice to customers asking them to Help Protect New York's Waters by mixing and disguising discarded drugs with something undesirable such as coffee grounds, cat litter or dirt before sealing the waste containers and tossing them in the trash.

Alternately, unwanted drugs can be dropped off at special collection events. One such event is held at all Kinney Pharmacies on the last Saturday of every month where non-controlled Prescription drugs and over the counter medications can be dropped off.

For OCWA customers that reside in Onondaga County OCRRA has assisted us with the following comment:

Do not dispose of medications down the drain or flush them down the toilet as they may pass through the wastewater treatment plant and upset the plant's biologic operation. Most sewage treatment plants do not have the capacity to filter out or treat certain items (hormone medications, chemotherapy drugs, antibiotics, etc.) Ultimately, this can create harmful results in wildlife populations; fish infertility, etc.

*Medical disposal events are held throughout the nation, however in a community like ours with a Waste-to-Energy Facility, they are unnecessary. Medicine brought to special disposal events are ultimately destroyed at Waste-to-Energy Facilities, the same thing that happens here in Onondaga County when you put old medicine in your household trash (without you having to drive it anywhere).

You don't need to attend a special medicine disposal event* to safely and properly get rid of you old medications, in Onondaga County all you have to do is place them in the trash. It is a good idea to disguise the medication, perhaps mix it into your garbage, so that it cannot be taken out of the trash by a third party, or pet, and ingested.

For more information please visit the DEC website; www.dontflushyourdrugs.net