Pharmaceutical Waste:

Disposing of Unwanted Medications

Because of the escalation of prescription drug abuse in the United States, recent updates issued by the FDA (2-10) direct consumers to "flush" old <u>controlled</u> medications down the toilet. Controlled medications are generally defined as those medications with restricted availability due to their potential for abuse or addiction, and include both pain and sleeping medications. Although this method of disposal prevents immediate accidental ingestion, it can cause pollution in wastewater, ultimately causing adverse effects in fish and other aquatic wildlife. When the water is eventually recycled, it can also cause unintentional human exposure to the chemicals contained in medications.

To dispose of expired or unwanted prescription or over-the-counter medications that are not controlled substances, please follow these precautions to prevent accidental or intentional ingestion:

How to Dispose of Unwanted Medications at Home:

→Keep the medication in its original container!

The labels may contain safety information and the caps are typically childproof. Scratch out the patient's name or cover it with permanent marker. Be sure to leave the content information clearly visible.

→Modify the contents to discourage consumption!

<u>Solid medications</u>: Add a small amount of vinegar to pills or capsules to partially dissolve them. The pungent vinegar smell will hopefully keep pets, other animals and young children away from the container.

<u>Liquid Medications:</u> Add enough table salt, flour, charcoal, or non-toxic powdered spice (such as turmeric or mustard) to make a pungent, unsightly mixture that discourages anyone from ingesting it.

Blister Packs and patches: Wrap patches and packages containing pills in multiple layers of opaque tape, such as duct tape.

→Seal and conceal!

Tape the medication container lid shut with packing or duct tape. Place it inside a non-transparent bag or container like an empty yogurt or margarine tub to ensure that the contents cannot be seen.

→Discard the container in your garbage can!

DO NOT PLACE IN THE RECYCLING BIN! Do **NOT** conceal medicines in food products because they may be inadvertently consumed by wildlife scavengers.

10/07/2010