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Illinois Poison Center Recommendations for Disposal of Unwanted or Expired Medication

In response to environmental concerns the Illinois Poison Center has developed new guidelines for the disposal of old or unused medication. The proper removal of medicine from the home will help prevent accidental poisoning for children and family members, decrease drug diversion or abuse of certain medications and lessen the negative impact of pharmaceuticals on the environment. Over the past several years, studies have shown the presence of drugs such as antibiotics, hormones and cardiac medications among others in our nation's waterways. Water treatment plants are unable to remove these compounds before they reach the environment. The majority of this contamination is most likely due to the natural excretion of the medication or its metabolized by-products from individuals taking the drug. Another significant source of environmental contamination is the amount of antibiotics and hormones given to livestock (e.g., cattle, pigs or poultry). While flushing unused medications may be a small part of this emerging environmental concern, it is a key behavior that can be easily modified.

Medicine Disposal Guidelines:

- 1) Where available, take expired or unwanted medications to an approved medication disposal site in your community. You may call your local health department or other government agency to find the locations.
- 2) If a medication disposal program is not available in the area, the unwanted or expired medicine may be thrown away in the trash:
 - **Liquids** should be poured over paper towels, kitty litter, or coffee grounds. Place the tightly wrapped mixture into a sealable or watertight container or bag.
 - **Solids** (pills, capsules, tablets) may be mixed with undesirable substances such as coffee grounds or kitty litter so that they are less likely to be eaten. Place the tightly wrapped mixture into a sealable or water tight container or bag.

When these medicines are placed in the trash, be sure to place them in an inaccessible location to minimize the chance of accidental poisoning of children and pets.

- 3) Flush medications down the toilet only if the label specifically instructs to do so OR if it is on the following list: of drugs recommended by the FDA.

The FDA advises the following drugs be flushed down the toilet and not thrown in the trash:

Actiq (fentanyl citrate)	Zerit for Oral Solution (stavudine)
Daytrana Transdermal Patch (methylphenidate)	Meperidine HCL tablets
Duragesic Transdermal Patch (fentanyl)	Percocet (oxycodone and acetaminophen)
Oxycontin (oxycodone)	Xyrem (sodium oxybate)
Avinza (morphine sulfate)	Fentora (fentanyl buccal tablet)
Reyataz (atazanavir sulfate)	
Tequin (gatifloxacin)	

** Always refer to the printed material accompanying medication for specific instructions*

For more information log onto:

www.earth911.org (To find a recycling center or hazardous household recycling location near you)

www.epa.gov

www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org (For free poison prevention materials and online educator training course)