THE PROBLEM WITH FLUSHING MEDICATIONS

When you flush medications down the toilet or pour them down the drain, they flow into the Cape Cod community's underground source of fresh drinking water, as well as into our lakes, ponds, rivers, and coastal waters, where they can harm our populations of local fish and wildlife.

Medications that are flushed down the toilet ***can and do*** *find their way into our nation's waterways every day. Those drugs are present in water that supports many species of fish and other wildlife."*

– H. Dale Hall, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Four Safe Steps Toward

PROPER DISPOSAL

1. Pour medication into a sealable plastic bag. If medication is a solid (pill, liquid capsule, etc.), crush it or add water to dissolve it.
2. Add cat litter, sawdust, coffee grounds (or any material that mixes with the medication and makes it less appealing for pets and children to eat) to the plastic bag.
3. Seal the plastic bag and put it in the trash.
4. Remove and destroy ALL identifying personal information (prescription label) from all medication containers before recycling them or throwing them into the trash.

Patients should ALWAYS refer to printed material accompanying their medication for specific instructions.

DO NOT...

...flush medication down the toilet!

...pour medication down a sink or drain!

COMMON QUESTIONS

Why doesn't Barnstable County collect these medications at an official place or time?

Due to Federal and State law, collections are costly and complex to arrange and require an on-duty police officer and pharmicist to be on site.

Why can't I just dump pills into my kitchen trash can? Do I really need to go through all those steps?

When pills are thrown directly into the trash, it can lead to unintended exposure to people or animals. People may go through the trash to obtain unused medications or personal information found on discarded prescription bottles. The extra steps provide a safer method for disposing of unused medications.

What do we know about the impacts of medications found in water on fish and wildlife?

Many pharmaceuticals and their by-products have been detected in waters. Researchers are currently examining the potential effects of these compounds on fish and wildlife.

What is an aquifer?

A **Sole Source Aquifer** is an underground supply of water designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as the "sole or principal" source of drinking water for an area. We get **ALL of our drinking water** on Cape Cod from our Sole Source Aquifer.

How important is it?

All uses of water on Cape Cod – whether for drinking, swimming, boating, shellfishing, cranberry farming, or wetland habitat – **depend on the health and quality of our aquifer.** Cape Cod's Sole Source Aquifer is directly effected by everything that goes down your drain, **including expired or unwanted medications.**

For More Information Regarding Safe Medications and Prescriptions Disposal...

- Contact the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension at (508) 375-6699
- Visit www.capecodextension.org
- Visit www.capecodgroundwater.org
- Visit www.smarxtdisposal.net

Barnstable County
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS PROGRAM
Collaborating with the University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extention
(800) 319-2783 *(508) 375-6699*

Think Twice About

UNWANTED MEDICATION DISPOSAL

A Guide to Safe Disposal of Medications and Prescriptions