

PharmaNotes

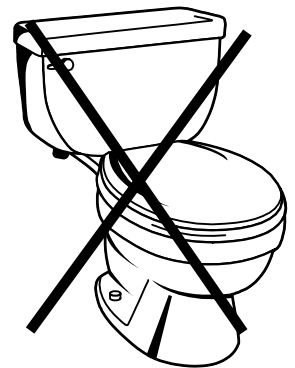
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How To Dispose of Unused Medications

Proper disposal of medications can help our keep our environment safe and prevent illegal diversion of unused medications.

How we dispose of unused medications has an impact on our environment and also on the potential for prescription medications to be diverted to illegal uses. Consumers were once advised to flush old or unused medications down the toilet. However, studies suggest that this could have an adverse impact on the environment. Thus, flushing is no longer recommended for most medications. In response to growing concern about how to dispose of old medications, the federal government released new guidelines in February 2007.



For most medications, flushing them down the toilet no longer is recommended.

Consumers are always encouraged to first check for approved collection programs in their community or with area hazardous waste facilities. Of note in the St. Louis region, temporarily consumers can drop off unused medications at Schnucks pharmacies as part of an 18-month research project. Call first to find out if the program is active near you. Otherwise, for most medications, simply

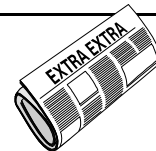
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Recent medications to be approved are as follows.

Risedronate (Actonel®)

was approved in April 2007. A less frequent dosage regimen will be available for treating and preventing osteoporosis: 2 doses of 75 mg each, taken on 2 days in a row each month.

Rotigotine patch (Neupro®) was approved in May 2007. It will be available late in 2007 to manage early-stage Parkinson's Disease. It is a dopamine agonist and works



Medications in the News

similarly to other dopamine agonists already on the market.

Exelon, one of the medications for treating Alzheimer's type dementia is now approved as a patch formulation (July 2007).

The diabetes drug rosiglitazone (Avandia) was in the news this spring because of concern about a possible increased risk of

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follow these guidelines.

1. Take unused medications out of their original containers.
2. Mix tablets, capsules, or liquids with an undesirable substance such as kitty litter or coffee grounds. Some organizations also recommend that tablets or capsules be mixed with a small amount of a cleaning fluid, such as liquid detergent or bleach, in the medication bottles, then disposed of in the trash.
3. Place them in an empty can, sealable bag, or other nondescript container.
4. Remove or blot out personal information from any medication



While the rule of thumb is not to flush, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has determined that certain medications should be flushed because of their abuse potential. Read instructions on your medications and talk to your pharmacist.

The state of Missouri also has a Prescription Repository Program. This program is more limited and will accept donated medications that are in sealed, tamper resistant packaging, as might occur in the nursing home or some residential care facilities. Medications must have been kept with a health care provider and not in the patient's possession. Drop off sites that are registered with the program will accept donated medications. At the time of writing, there was only one participating site, located in Osage Beach. For current information in your area, ask your retail pharmacist. You also can check on-line at www.dhss.mo.gov/drugrepository/repositorysites.html or call the Department of Health and Senior Services at (573)-751-6321.

As the medication experts on the healthcare team, pharmacists are available to further explain the above guidelines and let you know about specific programs in your area. Medications play an essential role in our society. Following these simple guidelines can help protect your family and community, prevent illegal diversion of unused medications, and minimize the negative impact on our environment. If you have any questions, contact Dr. Levy.

T ylenol® is the brand name for acetaminophen.

Acetaminophen is the most commonly used nonprescription pain medicine in America. It often is a good choice because it has few drug interactions and limited side effects compared to other nonprescription pain medicines like aspirin, naproxen, or ibuprofen. It also is an ingredient in



Using Tylenol Safely

many prescription drugs, like Vicodin®, Darvocet®, Lorcet®. Too much acetaminophen, however, can cause liver damage, and daily use can interact with the blood thinner warfarin (Coumadin®). If you have existing liver problems or drink 3 or more alcoholic drinks a day, your risk of liver damage with acetaminophen is

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increased. The usual dosages of acetaminophen for treating headache, muscle or joint pain range from 325 or 500 mg every 4 hours to 650 mg every 6 hours. If you have arthritis pain, higher doses often are needed and should be used as directed by your physician.

To decrease the risk of adverse events from acetaminophen use, it is important not to take more than the recommended amount in a 24-hour period. For most

patients, this is 4000 mg (4 grams) a day. However, patients who are at increased risk of liver damage should take no more than 2000 mg a day. Finally, many experts recommend that patients who are 65 years of age and older take a maximum of 3000 mg a day. If you take acetaminophen on a daily basis and also take warfarin, let your physician know.

Another caution about acetaminophen is that it is included in numerous non-prescription products, for example allergy products, cough and cold preparations, and sleep medications.

In addition, it is found in several prescription medicines as mentioned above. A recent survey found that most people do not realize how many different products contain acetaminophen, nor do they

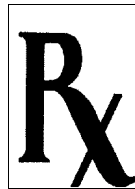
know the maximum safe amount of acetaminophen allowed per day. Thus, it is important that you add up the total amount of acetaminophen you take from any source – prescription and nonprescription products – to be sure you do not take more than the maximum in 24 hours. If you have any questions about how much acetaminophen is in your prescription or nonprescription medicines, contact Dr. Levy or ask your retail pharmacist.



Rx
for Good Health

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heart attack. Two studies were published. Both suggested a potential increased risk with Avandia compared to other diabetes medications or placebo (sugar pill). Neither study offered definite proof, and further study is needed before conclusions can be made with certainty. As a result, experts agree that patients taking Avandia should talk with their



physicians. For most patients, no change in therapy will be needed at this time. Decisions about Avandia should be made on an individual basis, considering patient age, how long the patient has been taking Avandia, what other medication choices are available, and what other medical conditions the patient might have.

Stay tuned for more information in future months.

About HbL PharmaConsulting

Hbl PharmaConsulting offers professional consultations to patients who take multiple medications. The goals of each consult include preventing and correcting medication-related problems, improving patient quality of life, and identifying ways to reduce drug costs. For more information, contact Dr. Levy.

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