



## Disposal of Your Unused and Expired Medications

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With the increasing number of medications available to treat a multitude of conditions, it is understandable that many of us have a medicine cabinet full of unused and expired medications. These leftover, unused drugs can cause many problems from diversion to proper disposal. In recent headlines, we learned that the medications we no longer use or need are now considered a toxic form of hazardous household waste.

Most of these headlines highlighted the medications we use, but the problem is much, much more than just prescriptions. These hazardous household wastes are known collectively as Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products (PPCPs). This group is comprised of a very broad and diverse collection of thousands of chemical substances.

Included in these are prescription, veterinary and over the counter (OTC) therapeutic drugs, fragrances, cosmetics, sun screen agents, diagnostic agents, supplements, growth enhancing chemical used in livestock operations and many, many others. All of these agents can be a problem to our environment and to our water supply.

Got more than a decade, studies have shown that prescription drugs and their by products are finding their way into our water supply, affecting the drinking water of millions of Americans. A 2002 U.S. Geological Survey study found that 80 percent of the streams and rivers testes had measurable amounts of drugs, such as steroids and reproductive hormones.

How do these drugs get into the water? We take our medications; they are eliminated from the body into the water supply as the drug itself or an alter version of the drug. There is not a way to change this process.

In the past, the public was directed to flush or wash the unused, unneeded drugs down drains. We have also been advised to alter them and place the "drug mix" in a sealed container, place it for pick up to be taken to a landfill.

With this disposal method there is still the possibility of children and animals getting into the drug residue tossed in the trash. After these disposal containers get to the landfill, residue in the disposal container eventually seeps into our groundwater.

Neither of these disposal methods are the most acceptable way to dispose of our unneeded, unused medications. Scientists are finding everything from aspirin to Zoloft in our streams, rivers, and lakes. Drugs can kill helpful bacteria in septic systems and pass largely untouched through sewage treatment plants.

While state regulations prohibit the return of medication to pharmacies and samples are not returned to the physicians' offices, we **can** change the way we dispose of the medications and supplements that we have not taken. There are innovative drug disposal programs where citizens can drop off unused, unneeded or expired medications. Communities, such as Louisville Metro have developed take-back programs or community solid-waste programs that allow the public to bring these types of medications to sites for collection. The collected medications will then be incinerated at a facility that is specially licensed and controlled to carry out such destruction. This method is the best way to dispose of unused medications since this regulated method has minimal effects on our environment.

The upcoming **Expired Drug Toss** is such a community wide take-back program. This is the fourth year that this greatly needed service has been organized by various organizations in TRIAD. Six sites throughout the county have been scheduled to accept medications and supplements for disposal. The dates for this year's Expired Drug Toss are May 21st through 23<sup>rd</sup> and the sites are noted below.

The Expired Drug Toss will accept:

- unused and expired drugs, bulk or loose tablets and capsules
- unsealed drops, sprays, tubes of medical creams and ointments
- drugs not stored properly

To speed up the drop off process be sure to mark out any personal identification information on the original containers (your name and prescription number). Place all your containers in a suitable bag for dropping off at each site. A drive through will be set up so that you will not need to even get out of your car. Louisville Metro Police will be available at each site to

receive the medications and supplements that are no longer being used. Share this information with your friends and family. All of us and our water will greatly benefit by each of us simply bring in these items for proper disposal.

Thursday, May 21	Christopher East 4200 Browns Lane	10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
	Franciscan Health Care Center 3625 Fern Valley Road	2 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Friday, May 22	The Kling Center 219 W. Ormsby Ave.	10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
	St. Denis Church 4205 Cane Run Rd.	2 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Saturday, May 23	Shawnee Neighborhood Assoc. French Mall (Near 38 <sup>th</sup> & Market )	10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
	Belmont Village Senior Living 4600 Bowling Blvd	2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

**Sponsors: AARP Kentucky, Catholic Charities Senior Services, Community Action Partnership, Franciscan Communities, Kentucky Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), Kentucky Indiana Planning & Development Agency (KIPDA), Louisville Metro Police, Louisville Metro Solid Waste, Senior Pharmacy Solutions and TRIAD**