

Going Green: Medications and our water supply don't mix

One area of environmental concern not often addressed is the increasing frequency of pharmaceuticals entering our public water as well as our lakes, rivers and streams. This is a risk that, if addressed now with preventative measures, could easily be halted from becoming a future problem. The old method of flushing unused medications down the toilet is not environmentally or medically responsible and should be avoided, unless specifically instructed on the label or accompanying information.

So, if flushing is not recommended, what should you do with the unused medication? There are several "Med Return Drug Collection Units" at your local police department. The following towns are participating in this program: Milton, Quincy, Braintree, Weymouth, Cohasset, Marshfield, Falmouth and West Yarmouth. The program is free, anonymous and no questions are asked. Medications from households are accepted in any form, including prescriptions, over the counter, and pet medication. Individuals are asked to keep the medicine in their original containers, tightly sealed and secured in a zip lock bag to prevent leakage and contamination. Participants are encouraged to remove or "black out" their personal information from the prescription label.

If you can't find a way to return unused medications, follow these guidelines from the Office of National Drug Control Policy:



- Remove prescription drugs from their original containers.
- Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds.
- Put the mixture into a disposable container with a lid, such as an empty margarine tub, or into a sealed bag.
- Conceal or remove any personal information, including prescription numbers, on the empty containers by covering them with black permanent marker, or by scratching them off.
- Place the sealed container with the mixture, and the empty drug containers, in the trash.

Information from the South Shore Medical Center