

Safe disposal options for pharmaceuticals

Expired or unwanted prescription or over-the-counter pharmaceuticals should never be disposed of by flushing them down the drain or toilet. Although this method prevents purposeful or accidental recovery of the medication, it can also cause contamination to Kansas aquatic environments as trace amounts of compounds are still present even with treatment by modern wastewater treatment plants.

Don't flush excess pharmaceuticals



Steps to safe disposal

Instead of flushing, please use this hierarchy of disposal options when disposing of prescription and over-the-counter pharmaceuticals at facilities like nursing homes, hospice care, and even homes.*

1. Return excess medication to a reverse distributor.
2. Dispose of excess medication through a collection program like local household hazardous waste programs that can accept pharmaceuticals from nursing facilities. These programs can not take controlled substances.
3. Incinerate through a contractor that is licensed to accept pharmaceuticals.
4. Dispose in a permitted hazardous waste landfill.
5. Dispose in a permitted landfill, preparing the excess medication using these steps:
 - a. Crush or dissolve pills in water, coffee, or another liquid. Make a paste of the dissolved pills or a liquid medication by adding it to kitty litter or coffee grounds.
 - b. Put the paste in a closed container and dispose of it in the trash.

* These steps to safe disposal are recommendations, from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and are detailed in a guidance document available at <http://www.kdheks.gov/waste/guidance/>.

This publication was published by the Kansas State University Pollution Prevention Institute. For more information call 800-578-8898.