



## INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

# Unwanted Medicines

[www.idem.IN.gov](http://www.idem.IN.gov)

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## Description:

- Keeping prescription and over-the-counter medicines out of the environment is an important way to prevent pollution.
- Pets and children can be poisoned from accidental ingestion of unwanted medicines thrown away in the trash.
- Proper disposal of unwanted medicines prevents illegal use or theft, including identity theft from discarded containers with patient information.

## Environmental Impacts:

- Because wastewater facilities aren't designed to remove pharmaceutical chemicals, they could be discharged to streams and lakes in treated wastewater. These chemicals may remain in the environment for significant periods of time because they do not evaporate at normal temperatures and pressures.
- Current research is exploring the link between reproductive and developmental problems in fish and other aquatic wildlife and their location living downstream from some wastewater treatment facilities.

## IDEM's Role:

- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while providing for safe industrial, agricultural, commercial, and governmental operations vital to a prosperous economy.
- IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance (OPPTA) assists communities in preventing pollution and protecting Hoosiers and our environment.
- IDEM educates communities about the impacts of pharmaceuticals on the environment and fund local pharmaceutical collection programs.
- IDEM continues to work with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to evaluate information about potential environmental impacts.

## Citizen's Role:

- There are a number of actions every citizen can take to reduce the amount of unwanted medicines:
  - Purchase only as much medicine as you need;
  - Centralize all medications in one location in your home to prevent the over-purchasing of products you already have;
  - Say "No" to samples that you won't use.
- The following are guidelines for the disposal of unwanted medicines:
  - Never pour medicines down the drain or toilet;
  - Never give or sell unwanted or expired medicines to others;
  - Ask your doctor or pharmacist if they'll accept unwanted or expired medicines;

- Take unwanted medicines to take-back or special collections in your community. (Unwanted medicine collections are often provided by local household hazardous waste collection programs);
- If a medicine collection program is not available in your community:
  1. Dissolve tablets or capsules in the original container with a small amount of water. For liquid medications, add sawdust, kitty litter, or flour to the original container;
  2. Remove labels from prescription bottles or completely mark out all patient information;
  3. Put all lids back on the containers tightly and put them in a heavy-duty, sealed bag;
  4. Put the sealed bag in the trash so that it is not visible to prevent unintended use or contact.

**More Information:**

- For more information about household hazardous waste collection programs, visit IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance Web site at [www.recycle.IN.gov](http://www.recycle.IN.gov).
- For more information about the potential environmental impacts of pharmaceutical chemicals, visit U.S. EPA's Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/ppcp>.
- For more information about government research on the presence of chemicals in the environment, visit the U.S. Geological Survey's Web site at <http://toxics.usgs.gov/regional/emc>.
- For questions and concerns, feel free to call IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance at (317) 232-8172, or toll free, at (800) 988-7901.

