

Safe Disposal Option Available for Unwanted Medications

Once it was common practice to flush unwanted medications down the drain. Your doctor or pharmacist may have even directed you to do this. We now know that these substances are bad for our environment - the ground, water, and air around us.

In homes that use septic tanks, prescription and over the counter drugs flushed down the toilet can leach into the ground and seep into ground water. In areas where residences are connected to wastewater treatment plants, prescription and over the counter drugs poured down the sink or flushed down the toilet can pass through the treatment system and enter rivers and lakes. They may flow downstream and mix with sources of community drinking water supplies.

Another issue related to the safe disposal of medication is the nationwide trend showing an increase in prescription drug abuse. Medicines that languish in home medicine cabinets are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse, and abuse. The prescription drug overdose rate in North Carolina increased more than 300% between 1999 and 2011. According to the Partnership for a Drug Free America, each day approximately 2,500 teens use prescription drugs to get high for the first time. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet.

The solution? Safely dispose of your unused, unwanted, or expired medications using the Prescription Drug Drop Box located at the new Alexander County Law Enforcement Center at 91 Commercial Park Avenue in Taylorsville. This option is the safest and most environmentally protective way to dispose of your unused medication.

The Drop Box has already collected over 56 pounds of various drugs to be disposed of in a safe manner. Items accepted include all prescription medications, all over the counter medications, pet medications, vitamins and supplements, suppositories, liquid medications in leak proof containers, homeopathic remedies, medicated ointments, lotions, creams, and oils.

If you have questions about the Drop Box you may contact the Alexander County Health Department at 828-632-9704 or the Alexander County Sheriff's Office at 828-632-1111.

