

Tips and Alerts

Oneida County Prevention Council Bulletin

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Safe Disposal of Medications and Sharps

If you're like most people, you don't give a second thought to getting rid of expired or unused over-the-counter or prescription medications; however, it's important to dispose of these items properly to help reduce harm from accidental exposure or intentional misuse. Consumers and caregivers should remove expired, unwanted or unused medicines from their home as quickly as possible to help reduce the chance that others may accidentally take or intentionally misuse the unneeded medicine.

Prescription Take-Back programs are a good way to safely dispose of most types of unneeded medications. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) periodically hosts National Prescription Drug Take-Back events where collection sites are set up in communities nationwide for safe disposal of prescription drugs. Area law enforcement agencies also sponsor similar programs in Utica, Rome, New Hartford, Remsen, Sherrill, Verona and Whitesboro. Utica and Rome Police Departments accept medications 24 hours a day. ACR Health at 287 Genesee St. in Utica, as well as area hospitals, accepts sharps such as needles and syringes. Consumers may contact local waste management authorities to learn about medication disposal options and guidelines. Visit www.dea.gov or call 1-800-882-9539.

If Take-Back programs are not scheduled for the near future, medications can be disposed of in the trash with a little preparation. Remove medications from all containers and mix with an unpalatable substance such as dirt, kitty litter, or used coffee grounds (do not crush tablets or capsules). Then, place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag before placing in your household trash.

As always, keep all medications and sharps out of the reach of children and pets. Careful and timely disposal of expired and unused medications, as well as sharps, can dramatically reduce unnecessary exposure, accidental overdose and unintended needle sticks, cuts or punctures from loose sharps.

Did you know?

Nearly 25,000 cases of accidental medicine exposure are reported to U.S. Poison Control Centers each year.

Approximately 5,000 cases involve children 6 years old and younger; 45% involved medicines stored in a childproof container.

Ingestion of another person's medicines can be harmful or sometimes deadly, even in a single dose.

5-10% of all new HIV infections occur from sharing used needles.

For information about future Take-Back programs, or if you have any questions, please contact Judith H. Reilly, Services Director, at jreilly@cflrinc.org or 315-733-1709.