

## Learn More About ...

If you would like more information about pharmaceutical disposal, you may want to visit some of these links:

There are new federal guidelines for the proper disposal of unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs.

[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/prescrip\\_disposal.pdf](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/prescrip_disposal.pdf)

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) has gathered sampling data that confirms the presence of pharmaceuticals in aquatic and terrestrial environments.

[toxics.usgs.gov/regional/emc.html](http://toxics.usgs.gov/regional/emc.html)

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has compiled information on potentially negative environmental impacts.

[www.epa.gov/ppcp](http://www.epa.gov/ppcp)

Wastewater Agencies in the Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego area sponsored a "No Drugs Down the Drain" initiative.

[www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org](http://www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org)

The City of Tempe collects and disposes of household hazardous wastes, including medicines at the Household Products Collections Center. You must have proof of Tempe residency to use this service.

[www.tempe.gov/hhw/we\\_accept.htm](http://www.tempe.gov/hhw/we_accept.htm)

Most other cities have collection events for household hazardous waste, including medicines. Check with your local solid waste program or visit [www.azrecycles.gov](http://www.azrecycles.gov)

## Contacts for Further Information



Arizona Department  
of Environmental Quality

Janice K. Brewer, Governor  
Henry R. Darwin, Acting Director

### Main Office

1110 W. Washington St.

Phoenix, AZ 85007

(602) 771-2300

(800) 234-5677

(602) 771-4829 (Hearing impaired)

Web site: [azdeq.gov](http://azdeq.gov)



Arizona Department  
of Environmental Quality

Janice K. Brewer, Governor  
Henry R. Darwin, Acting Director

# Prescription Drug Disposal...

## A Pain in the Drain

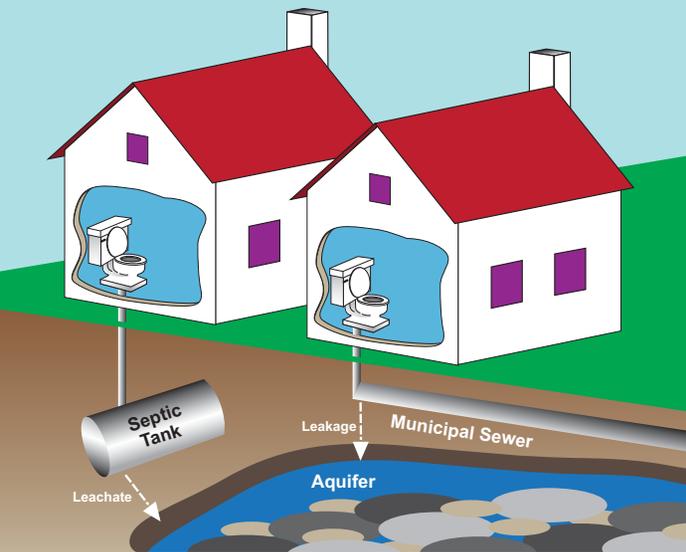


Updated January 2011  
Publication No. C 07-14

printed on recycled paper



# No Drugs Down the Drain



If you're like most people, you have accumulated a collection of prescription drugs and other pharmaceuticals that are no longer needed. Once it was common practice to flush these medications down the toilet. Many prescription and nonprescription drugs and chemicals in personal care products (PPCPs) are found at trace levels in treated wastewater discharged from sewage treatment plants. These PPCPs are found in human wastes or may be directly released to the sewer for disposal.

We now know that some of these substances are bad for our environment. As illustrated in the picture, the PPCPs can pass through sewage treatment plants and septic tanks into surface waters, soils, and the groundwater. The federal government has released new guidelines which are designed to reduce the diversion of prescription drugs while also protecting the environment.

## New Federal Prescription Drug Disposal Guidelines Urge You To:

- Take unused, unneeded or expired prescription drugs out of their original containers.
- Mix the prescription drugs with an undesirable substance like coffee grounds or kitty litter, and put them in impermeable, nondescript containers such as empty cans or sealable bags, further ensuring that the drugs are not diverted or accidentally ingested by children or pets.
- Throw these containers in the trash.
- Flush prescription drugs down the toilet *only* if the accompanying patient information specifically instructs that it is safe to do so.
- Return unused, unneeded or expired prescription drugs to pharmaceutical take-back locations for safe disposal. Ask your local pharmacy about pharmaceutical take-back programs.

### Facts About Prescription Drug Disposal

- Drugs can be scavenged and illegally sold, or could poison children and animals.
- Unused medications improperly disposed of can harm you and your environment.
- When drugs are flushed, they may not be broken down by the sewage treatment facilities and septic tank systems and can enter the soil, surface water and groundwater.
- Research studies have shown that exposure to drugs found in waterways is having adverse impacts on certain species of fish and other aquatic life.
- Pollution prevention - the elimination or minimization of the pollution source - is preferable to cleaning up the environment. Thereby minimizing both public cost and human and ecological exposure.

## Why Should I Take the Time To Do This?

PPCPs in the environment illustrate the immediate connection of the actions/activities of individuals with their environment. Properly disposing of unwanted medications may be inconvenient, but there are some very compelling reasons to do this in a safe and responsible manner.

### ● **It's your environment – Please don't flush!**

Drugs that are flushed down the toilet may pass through sewage treatment plants and septic tanks. These substances are released into waterways with the waste water which can lead to adjacent soil and ground water. Similarly, septic tanks systems may release the pharmaceuticals directly into the soil and eventually into the groundwater. Proper disposal of drugs is a straightforward way for individuals to prevent pollution.

### ● **Read the product label!**

Certain antimicrobial agents in personal care products, such as Triclosan, can also enter the environment via the drain. PPCPs containing Triclosan will be listed under Active Ingredients on the label.

### ● **You can make a difference!**

Children, pets or scavenging animals could find the medication and ingest it. Drugs could be scavenged and illegally sold. Take action to minimize the threat of accidental poisoning or drug abuse. Let's take precautions now to avoid harm to future generations and the environment. Your participation is appreciated!