



Disposing of Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products

What You Need to Know

Today's advanced water monitoring technology allows researchers to detect compounds from pharmaceuticals and personal care products in very small amounts in waterways and, in some cases, drinking water supplies. While research hasn't demonstrated human health impacts at these levels, the water community continues to pay close attention to scientific developments in this area.

Just the Facts...

- Because water professionals have the technology today to detect more substances – at lower levels – than ever before, pharmaceutical compounds and personal care products are being found at very low levels in some of our nation's lakes, rivers and streams.
- The fact that a substance is detectable does not mean the substance is harmful to humans. To date, research throughout the world has not demonstrated an impact on human health from pharmaceuticals at the low levels found in some drinking water supplies.

However...

- While pharmaceuticals and personal care products are rarely found even in very low levels in drinking water, some scientists are concerned about the possible cumulative effects of long-term exposure.
- While most pharmaceuticals and personal care products are known compounds, they may react in ways that are different from their intended purpose once they are introduced into the environment.

How should I dispose of unused medicines?

- The best and most cost-effective way to ensure safe water at the tap is to keep our source waters clean. As a society, we should encourage policies that protect source water from contaminants introduced by human activity. You can help by refraining from flushing unused medications down toilet or sink. Instead, find out if your pharmacy accepts medications for disposal, or contact the local health department for information about proper disposal of medications, cleaning products, pesticides, and automotive products. For more information on this and all water quality issues, contact your local utility.