

FAQ for Coalition for Safe Medication Disposal Pharmaceutical Waste Collection Events

1. How can I properly dispose of my household medications?

The best method for disposal is to take your unwanted household medication to one of our 9 drop boxes, located throughout Tompkins County:

Tompkins County Sheriff, Public Safety Building, 779 Warren Rd., Ithaca
24 / 7 / 365

Ithaca Police Dept., 120 East Clinton St., Ithaca
M-F, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Tompkins County Dept of Probation (Human Services Bldg.), 320 West State St., Ithaca
By appointment. Call or stop by the security window.

Cayuga Heights Police Dept., 836 Hanshaw Rd., Ithaca
M-F, 9-4:30, except holidays

Groton Police Dept., 108 East Cortland St., Groton
M, W, F, 8-4, or by appointment

Trumansburg Police Dept., 5 Elm St., Trumansburg
M-F, 10am-2pm, or by appointment

Cornell University Police Dept., G2 Barton Hall, between Statler Drive & Garden Ave., Ithaca
24 / 7 / 365

Dryden Police Dept., 16 South St., Dryden
M-F, 9-3, or by appointment

TC3 (Tompkins Cortland Community College) Campus Police, 170 North St.. (main bldg, rm 118), Dryden
When the campus is open: M-Sa 7a-10p, Su 10a-6p



[Some local pharmacies](#) also take back unwanted medicines.

The CSMD also offers occasional collection events. They will be advertised through local media sources, at www.healthyyouth.org. 2-1-1 will also have event details.

2. Will my privacy be maintained?

Yes. HIPAA law requires it. No personal information will be collected from prescription bottles from either the drop boxes or any one-day collection event. If you come to a CSMD one-day collection event, you will be asked to participate in a brief survey (how did you hear about the event, etc.) You will not be asked your name and survey responses are not linked to the medications that you bring.

3. Who is behind the drop boxes and collection events?

The Coalition for Safe Medication Disposal (CSMD) which includes representatives from the Tompkins County Sheriff, Tompkins County Health Department, Tompkins County Administration, Tompkins County

Dept. of Emergency Response, Lifelong, the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth, TCAT, the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility and private individuals.

Others supporting the effort include: Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division, the State Police Department, local police departments, Slaterville Volunteer Fire Company, Cayuga Radio Group, Purity Ice Cream, Collegetown Bagels and the Drug Enforcement Agency.

4. Who may participate?

ONLY participants with household medications. Health care facilities, doctor offices, veterinary offices and pharmacies are NOT (by law) covered by this program.

Do I have to be a county resident?

No, you don't. Tompkins County residency is NOT required. If you can make it, we will take it!

5. What CAN I Bring?:

Household medications. This includes prescriptions (including controlled substances), over the counter medications, dietary supplements and veterinary medications. These can be in the form of: pills, powders, liquids, capped epi-pens, vials, sprays, inhalers, gels, ointments, etc.

If possible, please keep your medications in their original containers. Please black out your name and address on the label. Please DO NOT black out the medication name, dosage, or amount dispensed information. Blacked out or not, no personal information will be collected from bottles.

A. What if medication has already been removed from original container?

Simply put the medication in a zip-lock type bag for transport to the collection event.

B. Do I need to remove pills from blister packs?

No. Please leave medications in their original packaging. Remove personal identifiers from the container. Black magic markers work well.

C. Can I bring a prescription that is not mine?

Yes, as long as it is not a controlled substance. Under current law, controlled substances should never be given to anyone else except law enforcement.

6. You CANNOT Bring:

Household hazardous waste (paint, pesticides, oil, gas, etc.), mercury thermometers, Mercurochrome, or medical waste, or medical sharps (needles, syringes, lances, etc.)

A. What should I do with mercury thermometers and Mercurochrome?

Bring them to the next [household hazardous waste collection event](#) at the Tompkins County Recycling and Solid Waste Center, 160 Commercial Ave, Ithaca, N.Y.

B. What should I do with sharps (needles, lances, etc.)?

Information on [local drop-off locations](#); information [on sharps disposal in other locations](#).

7. Why is flushing medications bad for the environment?

Medications flushed down the drain contaminate our water bodies and have adverse effects on our

environment. Wastewater treatment facilities are not currently designed to remove some of these contaminants.

Pharmaceuticals -- including antibiotics -- can be found in the drinking water supplies of at least 41 million Americans. The concentrations of the pharmaceuticals are small - far below typical medical doses - but studies have found problematic impacts on wildlife and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has acknowledged that the issue is a serious concern.

8. Why is throwing medications in the trash bad for the environment?

Throwing medications in the trash is also discouraged. It can lead to accidental swallowing by children or pets or could lead to misuse and/or abuse. When disposed of in the trash, these chemicals can contaminate the leachate (water that comes in contact with trash) from the landfill. Pharmaceutical contaminated leachate can end up in drinking water supplies.

9. Why not just hold on to these medications?

Keeping unwanted medications in your home could lead to a number of serious problems.

A. There is a risk that someone may take your medications without your knowledge. In fact, teen abuse of pharmaceutical drugs is a growing trend in Tompkins County and across the nation. Teens say they have easy access to prescription and over-the-counter drugs in their own homes, a grandparent's or other relative's home. The best solution is to safeguard drugs you keep in your home and to promptly and properly dispose of old or unneeded medicines.

B. Many children are accidentally poisoned by consuming medications found in their or a relatives home. The rate of such poisonings in this country has been increasing at an alarming rate.

C. Keeping unneeded medications also increasing the chance that adults will get confused and take the incorrect type or dose of medication.

10. Are expired medications safe?

“In order for a company to manufacture a drug, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires that they follow good manufacturing practices. Part of this requirement includes specific testing to determine an expiration date for the drug. This date is based on ideal storage conditions away from excessive heat, cold, and humidity. After that date, there is no longer any guarantee that the drug remaining is the amount printed on the label or prescription bottle. The expiration date simply guarantees that the drug will work just as well as when it was initially made. The expiration date for over the counter drugs is printed on the bottle. The expiration date on a prescription filled at a pharmacy is assumed to be 1 year from the date that the prescription was filled, when stored under proper conditions, unless otherwise stated.

A common question regarding expiration dating is whether or not it is “safe” to take drugs after they have expired. Unfortunately, the response to this question is not an easy yes or no answer. An antibiotic known as tetracycline breaks down over time into known toxic substances that can result in kidney disease and should not be used beyond its expiration date. However, most medications simply decrease in strength over time and may not work as well for their intended purpose because the chemicals that the drug is broken down into are not active. This breakdown is faster in the presence of excessive heat and humidity (such as in a bathroom) or excessive cold (an automobile in winter). This breakdown can occur even before the expiration date, if the medication is left in improper storage conditions like outside in winter or in a car in the summer.

Therefore, it is generally not advised to consume expired medications based on two principles. First, the medication may have lost potency and might not work as expected for its intended purpose. As a result, the disease that the medication is intended to treat may not be adequately controlled. Second, the medication may have started to decompose into toxic substances (i.e. tetracycline) and may be harmful if consumed.”ⁱ

11. Why should “returned” medicines not be used for overseas aid?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has strongly recommended that the recycling of returned medicines be ceased, for the following reasons:

- A. The “integrity” of previously distributed medicines cannot be assured. Strict controls are in place to regulate the manufacture and storage of medicines in the manufacturer, wholesaler and pharmacy environments. Frequent reports of adulterated medicines have reached the media. We should not apply double standards – if we are not to use the medicines, neither should another country.
- B. The recipient country often has no knowledge of medicines available in the “sending” country. Brand names differ, and most often the medicines sent are of no use in the circumstances existing in the receiving country.
- C. Black Market operations in third world countries are often very active. The interception of drug deliveries is common.

The preferred *WHO* protocol for medicinal aid is:

1. A medical person (doctor, pharmacist or nurse) with authority in the need country prepares a list of specific medicinal requirements.
2. The list includes delivery address requirements, and names of responsible recipients for the medicines.
3. The list is provided to an official Aid organization who contacts manufacturers and wholesalers direct. The contact seeks donations of required medicines from manufacturers, or at least a heavily discount priced contribution.
4. The required medicines are collected, collated, and delivered to the country in need, and to the specific authority requesting the medicines.

12. Where can I get more information?

A. General information about pharmaceutical waste:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) <http://www.epa.gov/ppcp/>
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/45189.html>
- Finger Lakes Poison and Information Center <http://www.fingerlakespoison.org/>

B. For Event Specific Information:

Go to: www.healthyyouth.org Email: egottlieb@cityofithaca.org or Phone: **Ed Gottlieb**, Chair CSMD 607-273-8381

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