

Medication Disposal

Policy:

Medication disposal should follow federal and state laws for all prescription, controlled, and over-the-counter medications.

Practice:

1. Medications that are no longer needed by the client, have been discontinued, and are unable to be returned to the pharmacy should be disposed of according to applicable laws and guidelines.

2. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) jointly released guidelines this year for disposal of prescription medications. Consumers are urged to **continue flushing controlled substances**. Controlled Substances must be destroyed so that they are unusable by another person to prevent diversion of the drugs.
 - a. Complete records of the controlled medications must be maintained by the facility including name of medication to be disposed, Rx number, dosage, number of pills or amount being disposed, reason for disposal, signature of RN, LPN, physician, pharmacist, or law officer disposing of medication, and a second signature of a witness. There must be “cradle to the grave” accountability for all controlled medications.

 - b. Controlled medication disposal documentation must be kept separately from non-controlled medication disposal documentation. Documentation must be easily retrievable.

3. According to the 2007 Federal Prescription Drug Disposal Guidelines (see #2), **prescription drugs other than Controlled Drugs, can ONLY be flushed down the toilet if the patient information specifically states to flush them**. This is necessary to improve and maintain the healthy water systems in the U.S. by decreasing the amount of pharmaceutical waste which has been shown to cause biological impairment to wildlife and humans.

4. Since hospitals, clinics, physician offices, businesses, and other medical facilities fall under the EPA Hazardous Waste provision for disposal of pharmaceuticals, Pharmacy Alternatives will assume that ICF-MR and all waiver and supported living environments would fall under this category also (as it relates to #2).

5. Unused prescription and over the counter (OTC) medications that do not meet criteria for flushing or for return to the Pharmacy should be disposed of by:

- a. Disposal into hazardous waste containers approved for pharmaceuticals which can either be:
 - i. Mailed to a reverse distributor licensed to dispose of pharmaceutical waste, or
 - ii. Picked up at the facility by an approved reverse distributor

 - b. Cost of disposal via a reverse distributor is assumed by the specific facility disposing of the waste

 - c. Any other acceptable forms of disposal that do not involve flushing medications and are safe for the clients and staff
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6. Hazardous waste containers approved for disposal of pharmaceutical waste should be obtained through your facility's medical supplies vendors.

 7. The facility must have a policy and procedure in place addressing accountability for all medications including controlled medications, prescription medications, and OTC medications.

 8. Vitamins, minerals, and herbal supplements should be disposed of following the same procedure as OTC medications.

 9. A [Medication Disposal Log](#) is included with this policy for facilities to use if needed.

 10. If a facility is disposing of excessive amounts of medication, it is the facility's responsibility to evaluate reasons for their increased pharmaceutical waste and to implement systems for decreasing their waste. The pharmacy can assist in providing suggestions for decreasing pharmaceutical waste through evaluation of ordering and usage procedures.

 11. Each state is governed by federal, state, and local laws pertaining to pharmacy regulations and each facility should follow all laws and regulations pursuant to their specific state.