

Don't Rush to Flush SJSU Protocol

Put medicines in their place!

We can all now agree that flushing unused prescription and over-the-counter drugs that may be sitting around your home is not the right way to get rid of them. But you may have been hearing some confusing advice lately about what you SHOULD do with leftover medicines.

Returning your unwanted medicines to a take-back program is the safest and most environmentally protective way to dispose of unused medication. If flushed, these pharmaceuticals can pollute our water and unintentionally expose us to the chemicals in these medications.

Recent studies have found that medicines flushed down the drain can contaminate our lakes and streams, which can hurt fish and other aquatic wildlife, and end up in our drinking water. Some medications, such as hormones and antidepressants, include endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs), which interfere with the reproduction and normal growth of many aquatic species, such as frogs and fish.

When medications are flushed down a toilet or drain, they enter the wastewater treatment system, which cleans up the water. Unfortunately, many of these treatments systems are not designed to remove medications.

In addition to the environmental impacts, prescription drugs in home cabinets are a significant cause of accidental poisoning. These drugs are also highly susceptible to misuse and abuse. Studies show that people who abuse prescription drugs often obtained them from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet. More Americans abuse prescription drugs than those using cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin combined, according to the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Medications are also as reported by the Poison Control Center.

The FDA, DEA, EPA, Office of Drug Control Policy and numerous agencies in Washington State recommend using medicine take-back programs as the best way to dispose of your unwanted medicines.

SJSU Campus Policy:

Drop off of expired or unused medication is only accepted at the Student Wellness Center at the Pharmacy on the first floor.

Accepted Housed Hold Medicines:

1. Schedule II - V Controlled and all Non-controlled medications
2. Over-the-counter medications (pills and liquid)
3. Medicated ointments/lotions
4. Pet medications

What CANNOT go in the Bin:

1. Illegal (Schedule I) substances
2. Medical Sharps and needles
3. Iodine-containing medications
4. Mercury thermometers
5. Radiopharmaceuticals
6. Chemotherapy or cytotoxic medicines

7. Compressed Cylinders or aerosols (e.g. asthma inhalers)
8. Vitamins and dietary supplements
9. Business medical waste

How to Safely Dispose of Medications:

1. Remove or obscure personal information from prescription containers to protect your identity.
2. Empty pills into a zipper bag and place bag in bin or dump pills directly into the disposal bin.
3. Liquids or creams, keep medicine tightly sealed in original container and place container in bin.
4. Recycle empty medicine containers.