

Safe Prescription Medicine Disposal



When prescribed by a provider and taken properly, medications can help us heal. But what do we do with leftover medications from our prescriptions? What about over-the-counter medications that have expired or are no longer wanted?

We need to be careful when disposing of unused or unneeded prescription medications.

Care must be exercised as certain prescription drugs like opioids (Vicodin®, OxyContin®) can be abused, wrecking the lives of individuals and stressing communities. When prescription or over-the-counter drugs are thrown directly in the garbage they can fall into the hands of the wrong people or leach into our environment through the landfill where, over time, they can create unintended problems for people, animals and fish. There is a better way to deal with this waste. Some ideas are listed in this document.

Setting up a prescription drug disposal program in your community

If you are the IGAP coordinator or Landfill Operator in your community, there are some steps you can take to start a prescription and over-the-counter drug collection program in your community. Prescription drugs are regulated by federal law and the law basically covers three types of take backs:

1. Take-Back Events
2. Mail-Back Programs
3. Collection Receptacles/Sites

Take Back Programs/Events

A first step you can take is to find out if your local clinic, hospital, or police department has a collection program. If there is one, ask the collector if they will also accept over-the-counter medications for disposal. Make sure to find out what the days and hours of collection are. Let residents know where they can take their medications for disposal. You could make a sign and post it at your landfill and/or distribute the information to the community in a flyer.



If your community does not have a collection program, ask your local law enforcement or regional health corporation if a take back program/event can be set up. The US DEA also hosts a National Prescription Drug Take Back Day each April and October. During these one-day events, you can take your medications to the locations for free disposal. Usually these events are held in non-rural areas in the state (usually Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau). See this site for the next DEA take back event in Alaska.

https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html

Mail Back Programs

Currently there is only one legal and effective way for a small, remote community (without access to a take back program) to properly dispose of prescription drugs: The medication mail back bag. The medication mail back bag is a prepaid envelope where medications are placed and mailed to be safely incinerated. These mail back bags can be purchased with IGAP or other funding and distributed to your community so individuals can safely package and send their own medications. It is better for individuals to mail out their own



medications because there are legal considerations and possible fined if an entity (e.g. the Tribe or City) runs a collection program for prescriptions drugs and improperly disposes of regulated prescription drugs.

To order medication mail back bags, you can search for private companies that sell medication mail back bags. Some examples of companies include:

<https://store.sharpsinc.com/medication-disposal-envelopes-usps>

<https://www.stericycle.com/en-us/solutions/specialty-services/seal-send-medication-in-home-medication-return>

For disposal of **non-prescription, over-the-counter medications**, the best method is to purchase and use Deterra drug deactivation bags or buckets. The Deterra products are an environmentally safe system for deactivating medications so they can be thrown away. The pouches will biodegrade in a landfill or dump. Deactivation can be easily and safely implemented in rural, remote villages with limited mail service or limited law enforcement. Please note, the Deterra drug deactivation system is not recognized by the Drug Enforcement Agency as a proper means for disposing of prescription drugs.

The Deterra products come in medium, large, and extra-large pouches as well as 3.5- and 5-gallon buckets.



To order the Deterra drug deactivation bag or bucket go to <https://deterrasystem.com/products/>

Collection Receptacles/Sites

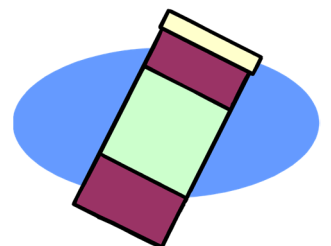
There are some sites in Alaska that have permanent collection receptacles (outside of Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau):

- Haines Health Center - SEARHC clinic (907) 766-6300
- Unalakleet - Anikkan Inuit Subregional Pharmacy (Norton Sound Health Corp) 907-624-5423
- Nome - Norton Sound Health Corp 907-443-3319
- Barrow - PHS, SSMH Pharmacy 907 852 9277
- Kotzebue - Department of Health and Human Services 907-442-7144

A site allowing searches by Zip Code and City is available here:

<https://apps.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s3>

Remember, do not place prescription medications directly in the trash or flush them down a toilet or place them in a honey bucket.



RESOURCES

RCAC's Proper Disposal of Drugs for Rural Alaskan Villages

<https://vimeo.com/463592316>

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium - Safe medication disposal supplies for your community

<https://anthc.org/news/safe-medication-disposal-supplies-for-your-community-available-online/>

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ADEC's Prescription Medicine Disposal Resources <https://dec.alaska.gov/eh/solid-waste/how-do-i-dispose-of/prescription-and-vet-medicine/>

The Federal Law for mail back programs can be read here:

https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/21cfr/cfr/1317/subpart_b.htm#70

Product Stewardship Institute, What to do with Leftover Medicines

<https://www.productstewardship.us/page/1027>

Other links and resources:

<https://recoveralaska.org/drug-take-back/>

<https://www.anchoragepublichealth.com/learn/medication-disposal/>

<https://www.fairbanksalaska.us/mayor/page/new-option-prescription-drug-disposal>

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Nursing/Pages/locations.aspx>

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Director/Pages/opioids/athome.aspx>

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Director/Pages/opioids/prescribers.aspx>

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.productstewardship.us/resource/resmgr/pharms_reports_factsheets/PSI_Pharms_Disposal_Info_She.pdf

<https://safe.pharmacy/drug-disposal/>