

# DISPOSE OF UNWANTED MEDICATIONS AND PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS SAFELY



The Solid Waste Agency of Lake County (SWALCO) and the Lake County Health Department are asking residents to dispose of unwanted or expired medicines and personal care products SAFELY.

Please do not dispose of these products down the sink or through the sewage system. They are harmful to the environment, polluting rivers, streams, and endangering the aquatic life living in them. Additionally, pharmaceuticals that are flushed can kill beneficial bacteria responsible for breaking down waste and damage septic systems. The best method of disposal is to take your products to a local household chemical waste collection around the county, where they can be processed and disposed of safely and conveniently.

SWALCO (Solid Waste Agency of Lake County) holds household chemical waste (HCW) collections which accept a variety of waste products, including pharmaceuticals and personal care products. These include prescription and over-the-counter drugs and supplements, as well as personal care items such as cosmetics, skin care products and perfumes. These free collections are held for Illinois residents periodically throughout the year at various Lake County locations. Visit [www.swalco.org](http://www.swalco.org) or call 847-336-9340 to find out more about upcoming HCW collections. Please read further for more information on this important issue and what you can do to help address it.

## Pharmaceuticals, Personal Care Products, the Environment and You

### What's the issue?

Pharmaceutical waste and personal care products (PPCPs) disposal is a rapidly emerging concern. These products are being produced and used in increasing volumes every year. They include both prescription and non-prescription drugs, cleansing agents, cosmetics, nutritional supplements and skin care products.

Pharmaceuticals that have been identified in water bodies include:

- Birth control hormones
- Antibiotics
- Antidepressants
- Tranquilizers
- Blood Lipid Regulators
- Antineoplastics (used in chemotherapy)

### What are the concerns?

It is believed that even in small quantities, pharmaceuticals and personal care products can be harmful to the environment and wildlife. Sewage treatment plants and septic systems are not designed to treat all the substances found in medications and personal care products. When flushed down the toilet or sink, some of these chemicals can impact the environment by passing through and entering rivers, lakes and groundwater.

Studies indicate that there may already be developmental and reproductive problems with some aquatic organisms and wildlife, which may have further impacts on ecosystems and the environment.

### What can I do?

- Do not pour or flush unwanted/expired medications or personal care products down the drain or toilet.
- Take unwanted or expired medications and personal care products to a household chemical waste collection program where they will be secured for proper disposal. Visit [www.swalco.org](http://www.swalco.org) for dates and locations of their collection events around Lake County.
- Return unwanted/expired medicines to your doctor or the pharmacy where it was purchased if they have a take-back program. If a program does not exist, encourage your pharmacy to start one.
- Only dispose of unwanted or expired medications and personal care products in the trash when other options are not available.



Please visit [www.swalco.org](http://www.swalco.org) or call 847-336-9340 if you have further questions about waste disposal and recycling, or would like to learn more about SWALCO programs. You can visit the Lake County Health Department's website at [www.co.lake.il.us/health](http://www.co.lake.il.us/health).