
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Kent County Health Department Reminds Everyone to Take Back Meds

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Health Department and the Department of Public Works teamed up with local pharmacies, law enforcement, and wastewater treatment facilities, in an effort to inform residents about safe, convenient access to medicine disposal. **West Michigan Take Back Meds Program** is working with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Community Pollution Prevention Grant Program, to promote www.wmtakebackmeds.org, a site that explains what you can do with unused or expired medications.

An estimated twenty to sixty percent of prescription medications go unused. For years, these expired or unneeded medications would be thrown into the trash or flushed down the toilet. Now considered environmentally dangerous, neither of these disposal methods are recommended. Putting unwanted or expired medicine in the trash leaves it vulnerable to being stolen and used, potentially resulting in illness or death. Throwing unused medication in the trash sends it to the local landfill, where it may seep into the surrounding water table. Flushing unused medications down the toilet sends these chemicals to sewage treatment plants, which don't screen for them. That means these chemicals often end up in rivers and streams, eventually making their way into Lake Michigan. The U.S. Geological Survey looked at 139 streams in 30 states in 2002. Testing found 80% of these waterways had chemicals from prescription and nonprescription drugs, as well as steroids and reproductive hormones.

The site will suggest Kent County pharmacies or other sites near you that accept:

- Prescription medications and medication samples (Except controlled substances e.g. Codeine, Ritalin, Vicodin, etc.)
- Antibiotics/steroids
- Cold and flu medications
- Vitamins/herbal supplements
- Pet medications
- Medicated ointments/lotions

Just leave the medications in their original container. Block out any identifying personal information on the prescription label, but leave the name of the medication unblocked. The drop-off site will make sure the medication is disposed of quickly and properly. If you have a controlled substance such as Vicodin or Oxycodone, the Kent County Sheriff's Department and its Sub-Stations have drop boxes that will keep these drugs secure and away from the public.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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