

HOW TO HANDLE LEFTOVER MEDICATION

Leftover, unused, or old medication is dangerous to keep in your home. It is important for you to know how to properly dispose of it.

WHY SAFELY DISPOSE OF OLD MEDICATIONS?

Keeping old medications in your home can put you or your family at risk of:

- **Poisoning.** Children and pets may get into the medicine and become sick or die. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of 2005, the number of emergency department visits by young children for medication poisonings exceeded visits by children for automobile accidents.
- **Having medicine stolen.** People who have access to your house may go through medicine cabinets and take the drugs without your permission. Painkillers, in particular, can be illegally sold or given away so others can get high.
- **Taking medicine after its end date.** All drugs have end dates, also known as expiration dates. Many medications don't work as well after this date. Some can degrade in quality and make you sick. Do not risk taking medicine after the end date.
- **Using medicine unwisely.** Although it may be tempting to use old medicines when you feel sick instead of going to the doctor, this is very risky. Self-medicating with your own old medicine may lead to delayed treatment of a serious medical problem. The medicine may be past the end date or you may have unexpected reactions because of new medicines you're taking. Talk to your doctor, who can check your symptoms and your history, and, if necessary, write a new prescription that is right for your current illness.

HOW DO I SAFELY DISPOSE OF MEDICATIONS?

- DO NOT** throw drugs in the trash, flush them down the toilet, or pour them down the drain. This can pollute the water.
- DO** ask your pharmacist about prescription drug Take-Back events and whether or not your community has a permanent prescription drug drop box.
- DO** ask your local police department and sheriff's office for information. Many law enforcement agencies in Arizona have installed permanent prescription drug drop boxes. Call and ask the days and hours they accept medications.
- DO** look online. Several web pages can point you to programs that collect unused or expired medicine such as:
 - Arizona Criminal Justice Commission – The AZCJC.gov website has a list of permanent prescription drug drop boxes that is updated regularly. Once you're on the site, click on Rx Misuse and Abuse Initiative.
 - If you can't get to a prescription drug Take-Back event or if your community doesn't have a permanent prescription drug drop box go to www.FDA.gov/forconsumers to learn how to safely dispose of medication.

