

Prescription Drug Takeback Boxes



Most people have an area in their home where they keep medications on hand. In general, some mild painkillers like Tylenol, Benadryl, and some sinus medications are typical on-hand types of medicines. In addition to these over-the-counter medicines, this area also stores prescription medications we didn't completely deplete. Things like pain killers for the broken leg a few years back or that blood pressure medicine that made you feel lousy, so you stopped taking it. We stash them away in our cabinets and forget about them until the next time we go to look for one of our over-the-counter medicines. We don't really feel comfortable using them again,

and most of them are expired anyway. What you do with these medicines is of particular importance to us at the Cherokee County Water and Sewerage Authority.

You see, there are two immediate disposal concerns when it comes to prescription drugs — **1.** Children, adults, or pets in your home accidentally or intentionally ingest, touch, misuse, or abuse these medications. **2.** The medication makes its way to the environment and ending up in our surface waters. Depending on which government agency you talk to depends on which concerns they are more vocal about. FDA and the Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad (CMANS) are most concerned about the first concern. In contrast, organizations that are concerned with drinking water and the environment are worried about the second. Let's evaluate your options for disposal and discuss the pros and cons of each.

For starters, you could throw it in the trash. That's safe, right? Wrong! It fixes your accumulation problem, but now it is going to the landfill. Once there, it accumulates space, and once the outer plastic breaks down, the medicine inside presents the opportunity to get into surface water or potentially groundwater. That is, of course, assuming someone/something doesn't get it out of the trash and ingest it first. After thinking about this option some more, we can see this is not the best option.

What about flushing it down the toilet? It doesn't have the opportunity to be used by unintended users, but it still adversely affects the environment. Our wastewater facilities can remove organics such as Nitrogen and Phosphorous from the water and destroy pathogenic bacteria from entering receiving streams. They are not designed to remove pharmaceuticals from the water, though. Which means it flows right through the plant and ends up in our waterways. So flushing is not a good option either.



The best disposal option for getting rid of unwanted medications is to take them to a pharmaceutical drop box. **These boxes are located in the lobby of the Canton Police Department headquarters, the Holly Springs Police Department headquarters, the Woodstock Police Department headquarters, the Ball Ground Police Department headquarters and the Administrative Building of the Cherokee Sheriff's Office.** They were purchased and managed by the Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad

(CMANS); this department is responsible for the consolidated efforts of Cherokee County law enforcement agencies and offices to address the drug problem. While the Drug Enforcement Administration offers a Drug Take-Back Day on a national basis, CMANS provides this service regularly. Citizens (no matter where they live) may drop off prescription drugs at these secure drop boxes. CMANS recommends that citizens who drop off drugs mark out their name and address before depositing prescription bottles in the box. **Liquids or Syringes are not accepted in the box.**

The next time you find yourself rummaging through your medicine cabinet, take note of the expiration dates, bag up the expired ones, and take them to one of the five prescription drug boxes located here in Cherokee County.



***Just as a reminder, if you have a particular topic or question you would like us to address, please send it to ccwsaea@gmail.com.**