

## **Q&A for Pharmaceutical Waste Collection Event**

### **How can I properly dispose of my household medications?**

Bring household medication waste to the March 6<sup>th</sup> collection event from 9-3 at the TCAT bus garage: 737 Willow Avenue, Ithaca, N.Y. Willow Avenue is opposite Dey Street, at a light on Route 13.

### **What if I can't get there on the 6th?**

You can store unwanted medications for the next collection event. Be sure they are kept in a location where they will not be readily accessible to others. The date of the next collection has not yet been announced. If safe storage is not possible, follow trash disposal recommendations (below.)

If you can't make it to a collection event, most medications should be taken out of their containers and mixed with used coffee grounds or cat litter, bagged, and put in the trash. A small number of prescription medications are labeled, "flush" since very small doses of these can cause serious harm if taken by someone else.

### **Who is organizing this event?**

The Coalition for Safe Medication Disposal (CSMD) is the organizer. The CSMD includes representatives from the Tompkins County Health Department, Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division, Cornell University, Lifelong, the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth, TCAT, and the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility.

Others are supporting the effort including: the Tompkins County Sheriff, Ithaca Police Department, Wegmans, and Tops Markets.

This is the first time a household medical waste collection has been organized in Tompkins County.

### **Who may participate?**

ONLY participants with household medications.

Doctor offices, veterinary offices and pharmacies are NOT covered under this current program.

### **Do I have to be a county resident?**

No, Tompkins County residency is NOT required.

### **What CAN I Bring:**

Household medications and veterinary medications. This includes prescriptions, controlled substances, over the counter medications, and veterinary medications. These can be in the form of: pills, powders, liquids, vials, sprays, inhalers, gels, ointments, etc.

Please keep your medications in their original containers. You may cross off your name and PERSONAL information ONLY. Please DO NOT cover up or remove the name or the dosage

of the medication. All medications and their containers will be incinerated with law enforcement supervision.

**What if medication has already been removed from original container?**

Simply put the medication in a ziplock bag for transport to the March 6<sup>th</sup> collection event.

**Do I need to remove pills from blister packs?**

No. Please leave medications in their original packaging. Remove personal identifiers from the container. Black magic markers work well.

**Can I bring a prescription that is not mine?**

Yes, as long as it is not a controlled substance. Controlled substances should never be given to anyone else except at a law enforcement supervised collection event.

**You CANNOT Bring:**

**Household hazardous waste (paint, pesticides, mercury, oil, gas).**

**What should I do with mercury thermometers and Mercurochrome?**

Bring them to the next Household Hazardous Waste collection event on April 17 at the Tompkins County Recycling and Solid Waste Center, 160 Commercial Ave, Ithaca, N.Y. For more information visit [www.recycletompkins.org/editorstree/view/166](http://www.recycletompkins.org/editorstree/view/166).

**What should I do with sharps?**

There are a number of local drop-off locations for sharps. Bring them to one of the following:

1. Cayuga Medial Center Receiving Dock Area, 274-4114, 7 days a week 7 AM- 3 PM.
2. Groton Community Health Care Center Lobby 898-5876, 7 days a week 8 AM – 4:30 PM. Sat. & Sun. Deliver to 1<sup>st</sup> flr. Nurses Station.
3. Kendal at Ithaca Resident Care, 266-5332, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed. of the Month 10:30 AM – 2:30 PM.
4. Lakeside Nursing Home, Inc. Receiving Area, 273-8072, Mon.-Fri. 10:00 AM – 4 PM.
5. Reconstruction Home, Inc. Lobby 273-4166, Mon.-Fri. 9 AM – 3 PM.

[www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/aids/harm\\_reduction/needles\\_syringes/sharps/docs/tompkins.pdf](http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/needles_syringes/sharps/docs/tompkins.pdf)

**For out of area locations:**

[www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/aids/harm\\_reduction/needles\\_syringes/sharps/directory\\_sharpscollection.htm#directory](http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/needles_syringes/sharps/directory_sharpscollection.htm#directory)

### **Why is flushing medications bad for the environment?**

Medications flushed down the drain contaminate our water bodies and have adverse effects on our environment. Wastewater treatment facilities are not currently designed to remove these contaminants.

Pharmaceuticals -- including antibiotics -- can be found in the drinking water supplies of at least 41 million Americans. The concentrations of the pharmaceuticals are small - far below typical medical doses - but studies have found problematic impacts on wildlife and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has acknowledged that the issue is a serious concern.

### **Why is throwing medications in the trash bad for the environment?**

Throwing medications in the trash is also discouraged. It can lead to accidental swallowing by children or pets or could lead to misuse and or abuse. When disposed of in the trash, these chemicals can contaminate the leachate (water that comes in contact with trash) from the landfill. Pharmaceutical contaminated leachate can end up in drinking water supplies.

### **Why not just hold on to these medications?**

There is a risk that someone may take your medications without your knowledge. In fact, teen abuse of pharmaceutical drugs is a growing trend in Tompkins County and across the nation. Teens say they have easy access to prescription and over-the-counter drugs in their own homes, a grandparent's or other relative's home. The best solution is to safeguard drugs you keep in your home and to properly dispose of old or unneeded medicines.

### **Why should "returned" medicines not be used for overseas aid?**

*The World Health Organization (WHO)* has strongly recommended that the recycling of returned medicines be ceased, for the following reasons:

1. The "integrity" of previously distributed medicines cannot be assured. Strict controls are in place to regulate the manufacture and storage of medicines in the manufacturer, wholesaler and pharmacy environments. Frequent reports of adulterated medicines have reached the media. We should not apply double standards – if we are not to use the medicines, neither should another country.
2. The recipient country often has no knowledge of medicines available in the "sending" country. Brand names differ, and most often the medicines sent are of no use in the circumstances existing in the receiving country.
3. Black Market operations in third world countries are often very active. The interception of drug deliveries is common.

The preferred *WHO* protocol for medicinal aid is:

1. A medical person (doctor, pharmacist or nurse) with authority in the need country prepares a list of specific medicinal requirements.
2. The list includes delivery address requirements, and names of responsible recipients for the medicines.

3. The list is provided to an official Aid organization who contacts manufacturers and wholesalers direct. The contact seeks donations of required medicines from manufacturers, or at least a heavily discount priced contribution.
4. The required medicines are collected, collated, and delivered to the country in need, and to the specific authority requesting the medicines.

*NOTE: A full description of the WHO Guidelines can be accessed at:*  
[www.who.int/hac/techguidance/guidelines\\_for\\_drug\\_donations.pdf](http://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/guidelines_for_drug_donations.pdf)

For **more information about pharmaceutical waste:**

- [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#)
- [New York State Department of Environmental Conservation \(NYSDEC\)](#)
- [Department of Environmental Conservation](#)
- [American Society of Consultant Pharmacists](#)
- [Finger Lakes Poison and Information Center](#)

**For Event Specific Information:**

Email: [egottlieb@cityofithaca.org](mailto:egottlieb@cityofithaca.org) or Phone: **Ed Gottlieb**, Pretreatment Coordinator  
IAWWTF 607-273-8381

Thank you to the Monroe County Dept. of Environmental Services, the USEPA, and Return Unwanted Medicines Project for permission to use their material.