



Newsline

Properly disposing of unused medicines

November 2006

For years, consumers have operated under the premise than *anything as safe as medicine is to ingest was safe to dispose of via the toilet.*

Flushing unused medications avoided “misuse” of substances and got them away from small children at home, pets that raid trash cans, etc. Until recently, most consumers did not consider potential long term consequences of such a wide spread practice. In 2002, the U.S. Geological Survey released a national study of surface waters. Of 139 streams involved in the study, a shocking 80 percent had common pharmaceutical drugs such as anti-depressants, hormones and antibiotics.

Municipal sewage treatment plants are not engineered for pharmaceutical removal. Consequently, many medicines are not captured or only partially captured during the process and may pass through a wastewater treatment plant intact, only to be released back into the environment along with treated water.

Many municipal water departments have guidelines about what is and is not acceptable for disposal via sewer systems. Contact

the local water department for specific guidelines.

Septic systems allow the earth to serve as a giant filter. If having a home septic system leaves you feeling very unaffected, consider that medicines flushed down those toilets can harm beneficial bacteria responsible for breaking down waste in the septic system. Much misuse via septic systems could allow leaching of substances into private wells, depending on conditions at particular sites.

- Chose environmentally friendly and safe methods to dispose of unused medicines. Some guidelines to follow include: Call local trash service for options. Some have household waste facilities where medications can be incinerated.
- Ask your pharmacist if there are disposal options in your area.
- If you must dispose of unused medicine in the trash, add a little water to solid medications, or solidify liquid medicines with some cat litter, sawdust or flour to keep medications from being taken accidentally by a child or pet.
- Keep products in original containers. Phar-

maceutical container caps are typically watertight and child proof. Double seal the container inside another container or heavy bag to prevent easy identification of the drug container or to prevent breaking of glass containers.

- Only purchase what you need.
- Say “No” to samples if you are not going to use them. They require disposal later.
- Centralize pharmaceuticals in the home to one location to limit over-purchasing products.

Read labels. Buy alternatives for any product which contains mercury.

Read the Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy’s “Unused Prescription Drug Program for Oklahoma’s Medically Indigent” at www.pharmacy.ok.gov. Click on “Rules” and read Chapter 12 of the 2005 Oklahoma Pharmacy Lawbook. Only unused medicines from licensed nursing home and assisted living centers are accepted at this time.

This Newsletter is published bi-monthly by the Kingfisher County OSU Extension Center Home Economics Program 101 South Main RM 13 Kingfisher, OK 73750 (405) 375-3822.

This Newsletter is given for educational information to the interested citizens of Kingfisher County.

This information is for educational purposes only. References to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsements are implied.
Editor:

*Paula Post
Extension Educator
FCS/4-H
OSU Extension Center
Email Address:
paula.post@okstate.edu*

Oklahoma State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, State and Local Governments cooperating. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, or status as a veteran and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

KINGFISHER COUNTY COOP EXT. SERVICE
 OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
 101 SOUTH MAIN, ROOM 13
 KINGFISHER, OK 73750-3241

HCE Leader Lesson Schedule-2007



January	The Healthy Refrigerator	Cathy James
February	Wardrobe Make-Over	Paula Post
March	Recipe Modifications/Better Health	Cathy James
April	Hispanic Culture & Customs	Joy Rhodes
May	Is Your Home Energy Efficient?	Joy Rhodes
June	Free Month	
July	District Lesson/Eating OK-Locally Grown	
August	Generic Vs. Name Brand	Paula Post
Sept	State Lesson/Water Testing	Paula Post
October	Say the Right Thing	Paula Post
November	Trim the Tree	Cathy James
December	Free Month	

OHCE STATE GOALS

CULTURAL ENRICHMENT-Enrich our lives and those around us by studying our culture and the culture of others.

FAMILY ISSUES-Educate families to strengthen developmental skills for present and future generations.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT-Encourage leadership development within our organization, home, and community.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT-Increase awareness of issues involved in daily finances.

HEALTHY LIVING-Develop and deliver educational programs concerning healthy living for the family.

MEMBERSHIP-Recruit and retain membership in OHCE.

