

Home Health Foundation, Inc

SUBJECT: Disposal of Medications/Controlled Substances

PURPOSE: To ensure the appropriate disposal of medications including controlled substances in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. To provide information to patients and families regarding proper disposal of unwanted medication.

POLICY:

Merrimack Valley Hospice (MVH and York Hospital Hospice) Nursing staff- MVH nurses will dispose of patient's medications when the medications are no longer needed and /or upon the death of a residing in a private residence (including assisted living). MVH nurses may dispose of medication for a patient discharged alive, if requested to do so.

Home Health VNA and HCI (Home Care Inc.) Nursing staff- are responsible for providing information to patients and families regarding unwanted medication disposal. VNA and HCI staff may perform or supervise the disposal of medications in the patient's home. VNA staff who perform a death pronouncement will dispose of medications upon the death of patient in the home.

PROCEDURE:

There are three options for disposal of medications:

1. Medications recommended for Disposal by Flushing (Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Guidelines February 2013)
2. Disposal from Home
3. Community Disposal (Drug/Medication Take back Programs)

Medications recommended for Disposal by Flushing- Home Health Foundation (HHF) Nursing staff will follow the FDA guidelines for disposal by flushing. (See Attachment #1) This method is the most appropriate route of disposal that presents the least risk of safety. Flushing of these controlled medications reduces the danger of unintentional use, overdose or illegal abuse. Disposal of CADD pump cassettes and medication bags from infusion devices will be done by cutting the bag and draining the medication into the toilet. Nursing staff will wear gloves when performing medication disposal by flushing.

Disposal from Home- For all other medications, disposal may be in the household trash following these guidelines:

- Dissolve solid (tablet, capsules) medication in warm water. Do not crush tablets or capsules.

- Mix with an unpalatable substance such as used coffee grounds, cayenne pepper, Comet cleanser or kitty litter.
- Place the mixture in sealed plastic bag
- Discard the bag in household trash.
- When discarding medication containers; remove or scratch out any identifying patient or medication information from the container.

Community Disposal- City and town sponsored unwanted medication take back programs is an effective way to remove expired, unwanted, or unused medications from the home. Disposal reduces the chance that others may accidentally take the medicine, and the risk of medication diversion.

See Attachment #2 for list of Medication take back programs