

**Home Health Foundation, Inc.**

**SUBJECT: DISPOSAL OF MEDICATIONS/CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**

**PURPOSE:** To provide education to patients and families regarding proper disposal of unwanted medication in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations.

**POLICY**

**Merrimack Valley Hospice (MVH)**

- **Community Nursing Staff** - MVH nurses will educate and direct caregivers regarding proper disposal of patients' medications when the medications are no longer needed and/or upon the death of a patient residing in a private residence (including assisted living). MVH nurses may not dispose of medication for a patient discharged alive, if requested to do so.
- **Patients residing in a facility** - Medications are disposed by facility staff according to facility policy.

**Home Health VNA (VNA) and HomeCare, Inc. (HCI) Nursing Staff** are responsible for providing information to patients and families regarding unwanted medication disposal. VNA and HCI staff may not dispose of medications but may supervise the disposal of medications by the family in the patient's home.

**PROCEDURE**

There are two options for disposal of medications:

1. ***Disposal from Home:*** Unused medications may legally be disposed of in two ways:

- A. Disposal into the water system:

The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) recommends flushing narcotics and other controlled substances down the toilet or sink, instead of throwing them into the trash. Flushing prevents drugs from being accidentally used by children, or anyone else for whom they were not prescribed, including family pets.

1. Nursing staff will educate families/caregivers following the FDA guidelines for disposal by flushing; refer to Attachment #1 – "*Medications Recommended for Disposal by Flushing*". This method is the most appropriate route of disposal that presents the least risk of safety. 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. If present, nursing staff will supervise when family/caregiver performs medication disposal by flushing.

## B. Disposal into Trash (Non-narcotic or other controlled substances)

Federal guidelines released in February, 2007 offer an alternative to flushing medications down the sink or toilet. If this option is preferred, the guidelines below will be taught to families/caregivers.

1. To safeguard private health information, cross out the personal information on the medication containers. A black, permanent marker is useful.
2. Take unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs out of their original containers.
3. Mix the prescription drugs with flour (coffee grounds, unused kitty litter, or salt may be used) and put them in impermeable, non-descript containers (such as empty cans with lids or zip-lock type plastic bags). This ensures that the drugs are not diverted (that is, someone other than the patient using the medication), or accidentally ingested by children or pets. Multiple medications may be placed together in a single, large container that can accommodate larger volumes of waste.
4. Ensure that the drugs are unusable and prevent the unintentional or intentional ingestion of discarded medications by following the actions listed below:
  - i. Liquid Medications: Add flour, kitty litter, coffee grounds, or salt to the original container and replace the container's cap (a funnel is helpful).
  - ii. Tablets and Capsules: Add water to the container/zip-lock bag, followed by flour, kitty litter, coffee grounds, or salt. Replace the container's cap/secure bag
  - iii. Suppositories: Add flour, kitty litter, coffee grounds, or salt to the container/zip-lock bag, and replace the container's cap/secure bag.
  - iv. Transdermal Patches: Using disposable gloves, remove patches from the packaging or the patient's skin. Immediately fold the patch, sticky sides together, and flush it down the toilet. When flushed immediately, the patch cannot be accidentally used by children, or anyone else for whom it was not prescribed, including family pets. Remove and dispose of gloves and wash hands thoroughly.
  - v. Medicated Ointments and Creams: Mix flour, kitty litter, coffee grounds, or salt into the original container. If this is not feasible, squeeze or scoop medication into a plastic container and mix in the flour, kitty litter, coffee grounds, or salt. Replace the container's cap.
  - vi. Medication/Pill Organizers: Follow the guidelines for tablets and capsules.
5. Place all medication containers/zip-lock bags in a plain paper bag to discourage identification and tampering. Dispose of the paper bag in the trash.
6. The nurse will document the disposal of medications by family/caregivers using the Medication Disposal form in Mobilewyse. (Located in Add a Form). This documentation includes review of proper disposal techniques if disposal guidance is declined and if disposal is witnessed, the type of disposal method used, and the medications disposed.

2. **Community Disposal** - City and town sponsored unwanted medication take back programs are 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. Refer to Attachment #2 - "*Community Medication Take Back/Disposal Programs*".

Under no circumstances are medications to be removed from home by HHF staff or volunteers.

Responsibility: Nursing Staff  
 Distribution: Leadership

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Nature of Change	Updated
CCO Signature:	_____ / ____ / ____ Date
CEO Signature:	_____ / ____ / ____ Date

## Medicines Recommended for Disposal by Flushing

### Listed by Medicine and Active Ingredient

There is a small number of medicines that may be especially harmful and, in some cases, fatal with just one dose if they are used by someone other than the person for whom the medicine was prescribed. This list from FDA tells you what expired, unwanted, or unused medicines you should flush down the sink or toilet to help prevent danger to **people and pets in the home**.

<i>Medicine</i>	<i>Active Ingredient</i>
<a href="#">Abstral (PDF - 1M)</a> , tablets (sublingual)	Fentanyl
<a href="#">Actiq (PDF - 251KB)</a> , oral transmucosal lozenge *	Fentanyl Citrate
<a href="#">Avinza (PDF - 51KB)</a> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
Buprenorphine Hydrochloride, tablets (sublingual) *	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride
Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride, tablets (sublingual) *	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Butrans (PDF - 388KB)</a> , transdermal patch system	Buprenorphine
<a href="#">Daytrana (PDF - 281KB)</a> , transdermal patch system	Methylphenidate
Demerol, tablets *	Meperidine Hydrochloride
Demerol, oral solution *	Meperidine Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Diastat/Diastat AcuDial</a> , rectal gel [for disposal instructions: click on link, then go to "Label information" and view current label]	Diazepam
Dilaudid, tablets *	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
Dilaudid, oral liquid *	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Dolophine Hydrochloride (PDF - 48KB)</a> , tablets *	Methadone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Duragesic (PDF - 179KB)</a> , patch (extended release) *	Fentanyl
<a href="#">Embeda (PDF - 39KB)</a> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate; Naltrexone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Exalgo (PDF - 83KB)</a> , tablets (extended release)	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Fentora (PDF - 338KB)</a> , tablets (buccal)	Fentanyl Citrate

\* These medicines have generic versions available or are only available in generic formulations.

FDA continually evaluates medicines for safety risks and will update the list as needed. Please visit the **Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know** page at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) for more information.

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<a href="#">Hysingla ER (PDF - 78KB)</a> tablets (extended release)	Hydrocodone Bitartrate
<a href="#">Kadian (PDF - 135KB)</a> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
Methadone Hydrochloride, oral solution *	Methadone Hydrochloride
Methadose, tablets *	Methadone Hydrochloride
Morphine Sulfate, tablets (immediate release) *	Morphine Sulfate
<a href="#">Morphine Sulfate (PDF - 282KB)</a> , oral solution *	Morphine Sulfate
<a href="#">MS Contin (PDF - 433KB)</a> , tablets (extended release) *	Morphine Sulfate
<a href="#">Nucynta ER (PDF - 38KB)</a> , tablets (extended release)	Tapentadol
<a href="#">Onsolis (PDF - 297KB)</a> , soluble film (buccal)	Fentanyl Citrate
Opana, tablets (immediate release)	Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Opana ER (PDF - 56KB)</a> , tablets (extended release)	Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
Oxecta, tablets (immediate release)	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
Oxycodone Hydrochloride, capsules	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Oxycodone Hydrochloride (PDF - 100KB)</a> , oral solution	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Oxycontin (PDF - 417KB)</a> , tablets (extended release)	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
Percocet, tablets *	Acetaminophen; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
Percodan, tablets *	Aspirin; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Suboxone (PDF - 83KB)</a> , film (sublingual)	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride
<a href="#">Xartemis XR (PDF - 113KB)</a> tablets	Oxycodone Hydrochloride; Acetaminophen

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<a href="#">Xyrem (PDF - 185KB)</a> , oral solution	Sodium Oxybate
<a href="#">Zohydro ER (PDF - 90KB)</a> capsules (extended release)	Hydrocodone Bitartrate
<a href="#">Zubsolv (PDF - 354KB)</a> , tablets (sublingual)	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride

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**COMMUNITY MEDICATION TAKE BACK/DISPOSAL PROGRAMS**

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>DISPOSAL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</b>
Billerica MA	“Unwanted Medication Kiosk” in lobby of Billerica Police Department. Accepts sealed plastic bags with medication.	No sharps or liquids
Danvers MA	Padlocked mailbox in lobby of police station @ 120 Ash Street. Accepts sealed plastic bags with medication.	Remove labels from containers. No sharps Liquids in bottles in sealed bags.
Dracut MA	Kiosk in lobby of Dracut Police Department @ 110 Loon Hill Road.	No liquids or sharps. Bag containing pills no larger than two slices of bread. Accessible 24/7
Georgetown, MA	Police Department 47 Central Street	
Haverhill, MA	Kiosk in Lobby of Haverhill Police Department @ 40 Bailey Boulevard	Available 24/7
Ipswich MA	Drop off box at Ipswich Police Department @ 15 Elm Street	
Lawrence MA	See “North Andover”	
Lowell MA	Kiosk located at Lowell Police Department. Accepts sealed plastic bags with medication.	No sharps or liquids Bags no larger than 1 and one quarter inch
Newburyport MA	Front lobby at Newburyport Police Department @ 4 Green Street	No IV solutions, injectables or needles. No illicit substances such as marijuana or methamphetamines. Available 24/7
North Andover MA	Kiosk at North Andover Police Department @ 1475 Osgood Street	Available 24/7
Reading MA	<b>Non controlled medications</b> – Walgreen’s Pharmacy @ 17 Harnden Street <b>Controlled Substances</b> - Police Department @ 15 Union Street	Two separate locations for non controlled and controlled substances
Salem NH	Kiosk in Lobby of Police Department @ 9 Veterans Memorial Parkway	Available 24/7
Westford MA	Westford Police Department 24-hour drop box in lobby Accepts sealed plastic bags with medication.	No sharps, medications in a syringe liquids, IV bags, inhalers, thermometers, hydrogen peroxide, personal care products
Windham NH	Police Department 4 Fellows Road	
York Maine	Kiosk lobby York PD 36 Main St	Available 24/7 No sharps, liquids IV bags, inhalers, thermometers