

Talk About Prescriptions Month Web Info:

Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program



The Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program uses the mail to return unwanted, unused, and expired medicine to the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency for proper disposal. The program provides a safe and anonymous method of drug disposal for Maine residents. The program is the first of its kind in the country.

The goals of the Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program are to:

1. Prevent increasingly evident environmental exposures and impacts from improper disposal, especially to the aquatic ecosystem;
2. Minimize accidental overdoses by people, pets and wildlife;
3. Limit opportunities for drug-related crime and subsequent abuse;
4. Provide a safe alternative to drug stockpiling in homes;
5. Preclude bad drug donations; and
6. Facilitate pharmacoeconomic assessments of waste and prescriptions, insurance, and reimbursement and dispensing policies and practices.
7. Educate the public about proper medicine management and disposal
8. Serve as a national model for safe and effective drug return programming

Over the course of the next two years, the Safe Medicine Disposal for Me Program will provide 20,000 medicine return envelopes to Maine residents free of charge through a network of over 100 distributions sites throughout the State of Maine including:

- 1 Pharmacies
- 2 Police Departments
- 3 Healthcare Offices
- 4 Area Agencies on Aging
- 5 Social Service Agencies
- 6 Hospice agencies
- 7 Community groups

Under the program model, consumers obtain a specially designed medicine return envelope at a location most convenient for them. They then bring the envelope home and prepare their medicine for proper disposal by enclosing all unwanted medicine according to the instruction booklet included in each envelope. The envelopes are mailed just like any other letter or package through the U.S. Postal Service (each envelope is pre-addressed for delivery directly to the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency). There is a program helpline that participants can call with questions.

The mail back return program complies with all federal requirements for mailing, as well

as requirements of the Controlled Substances Act, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Research

Research is conducted on the medicines that are returned via the program. Program participants also complete a brief survey on the program. This information is used to inform the public, healthcare providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders about the need to curtail medicine accumulation. Some of the information collected via the program includes:

- 1 Medicine name, quantity, and classification
- 2 Origin of the medicine that was returned
- 3 Reasons the medicine has gone unused or is no longer needed
- 4 A profile of program participants (age, gender, location, etc.)
- 5 Methods commonly used to dispose of medicine prior to using the program

What are the benefits of this model?

Many other areas of the country are considering replicating our model of drug disposal. Here's why:

- 1 Avoids the harmful environmental impacts and health hazards of flushing or disposing of drugs via household trash
- 2 Easy, convenient, and anonymous way of disposing of drugs
- 3 Takes advantage of the security protocols of the U.S. Postal Service mail system
- 4 Accessible to those who live in rural areas and are unable to attend event-based or on-site medicine return programs
- 5 Drugs are returned directly to the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency so the program is able to accept controlled substances
- 6 From a social standpoint such a program presents the opportunity to: limit drug related crimes, limit opportunities for drug abuse, and reduce waste related to medical and insurance costs by providing a safe alternative from stockpiling medications in consumer's homes
- 7 The potential environmental benefits include: protecting water and soil supplies from drug contamination and prevention of accidental poisonings of humans, pets, and wildlife

Community Education

The Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program also hosts a corps of volunteers who provide community-based presentations on medicine disposal. These volunteers serve as

the backbone of the program's outreach and education campaign providing an opportunity for discussion of issues most relevant in their communities.

Collaboration

The Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program has grown out of a unique collaboration between environmental, drug enforcement, and healthcare officials at the local, state, and federal level. Lessons learned through this program will be used to shape state and national public policy, physician prescribing practices, and health education outreach strategies. In fact, as a result of these collaborations and the level of intercommunication and sharing of data, the state of Maine is moving to curtail prescriptions to 15 days for the first prescription of selected drugs. This marks the first time in the U.S. that a drug disposal program and its efforts have led to healthcare policy changes.

Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program partners include the: Maine Office of Adult Mental Health Services, Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, University of Maine Center on Aging, United States Environmental Protection Agency, United States Postal Service, Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety, Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Rite Aid Pharmacies, Maine Office of Elder Services, Maine Office of Substance Abuse, Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians, Maine Office of the Attorney General, Maine Pharmacy Association, Maine RSVP Programs, Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, National Council on Patient Information and Education, Miller Drug, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, CVS Pharmacies, Maine Medical Association, Northern New England Poison Center, Villanova University Center for the Environment, Maine Council for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of New England and community organizations and pharmacies throughout Maine.

The program is funded through a Fund for Healthy Maine allocation from the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency and administered by the University of Maine Center on Aging, a member of the Safe Medicine for Maine Partnership (a new partnership whose aim is to educate people about poison prevention strategies and safe disposal methods). The Safe Medicine for Maine Partnership was formed by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the Northern New England Poison Center, the United States Post Office, the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians, the United States Attorney's Office, the University of Maine Center on Aging, and the Pharmacy Group of New England.

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A detailed fact sheet on medicine disposal issues is available online at:

<http://www.safemeddisposal.com/documents/DetailedFactSheet4-15-08.pdf>