



PROTECTING CLEAN WATER TOGETHER

By Carol Hillestad for the Brodhead Watershed Association

Where is “away” anyway?

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Opioids. Steroids. Antidepressants. Contraceptives. Antibiotics. Serious prescription drugs like these can get into drinking water. (Yes, even well water.)

When we throw stuff “away” — by flushing expired or no-longer-needed drugs — it doesn’t magically vanish. Chemicals like these last. They move through the environment, get into waterways and aquifers, harm fish, plants, birds, and other creatures. And can return, like vengeful spirits, to haunt our drinking water.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Lots of places make it easy to safely, dependably dispose of unused, unwanted, or expired medicine, both prescription and over-the-counter.

Law enforcement headquarters are one good option. In the Brodhead watershed, State Police Troop N hosts a 24-hour dropbox in the lobby of their Rimrock Drive location. (First take the medicine out of the bottle and put it in a ziplock bag.) Pocono Township Police Department also accepts bagged drugs without bottles at their location on route 611 during normal office hours. Monroe County Sheriff’s office will, too — after the Courthouse renovation is finished, in early 2024.

Hospitals also accept excess drugs. Like law enforcement, they require that you bag the pills and dispose of the bottles in the trash yourself. Take the bagged drugs to the first floor pharmacy at LVHN-Pocono on East Brown Street, East Stroudsburg, or to St. Luke’s Monroe campus on route 611 in Stroud Township.

Many commercial pharmacies will take old, expired, or unused meds. CVS stores in Mountainhome, Pocono Summit, and Tannersville have drop boxes in the pharmacy area. If a drop box is full or locked, staff members will accept the bagged drugs during regular pharmacy business hours.

So break the spell of those zombie medications cluttering up your medicine chest. Don’t throw them “away.” Get rid of them for good!

Good to know

- Many pharmaceuticals in wastewater come from human and animal excretions. For some drugs, up to 90 percent of a dose a person takes is eliminated.
- Whether wastewater treatment plants purify out these chemicals from water depends on what processes they use — the most effective practices are also among the most expensive.
- If there are children in your household, be especially vigilant about securing and disposing of drugs. Find information on medicine safety at <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/safety-poisoning.html#:~:text=Medicine%20Safety&text=Kids%20can%20climb%20up%20using,medicines%20in%20their%20original%20containers>
- For more drug take-back information: <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-drug-take-back-locations>



Just one pill can kill. Learn how to dispose of expired and unneeded meds safely.

For humans, fish, and every living thing, Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quality and quantity throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member today. <https://www.brodheadwatershed.org>.