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News Release



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Improper Disposal of Unused Medication Sparks Creation of New Awareness Program

SMARxT DIPOSAL Question and Answers

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the American Pharmacists Association have joined forces to help protect our nation's fish and aquatic resources from improper disposal of medication. Officials from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) signed a formal agreement on March 17, 2007 outlining how they will work cooperatively to build consumer awareness of the hazards posed by the improper disposal of unused and expired medications into the nation's waterways. As part of the effort - dubbed "SMARxT DISPOSAL" - the USFWS and the APhA will work to publicize the potential environmental and health impacts of unused medications when they are flushed into our nation's sewer systems.

"Medications that are flushed down the toilet or thrown straight into the garbage can and do find their way into our nation's waterways every day. Those drugs are present in water that supports many species of fish and other wildlife," said H. Dale Hall, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We are concerned about reports of fish abnormalities possibly caused by improperly disposed prescription medications. That's why we are excited about this new partnership with the Association and its ability to educate the public about simple things they can do to clean up our waters and help prevent fish, and people, from inadvertent exposure to prescription medication."

This new initiative was unveiled at APhA's annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, one of the largest gatherings of pharmacy professionals and health services providers in the country.

"Medications play a vital role in our society," added Dr. John A. Gans, Executive Vice President and CEO of APhA. "Consumers - and pharmacists - should be aware that it is important to take that extra step to protect our families and our natural resources, including our many waterways, fish and other aquatic organisms."

The consumer outreach campaign will feature educational brochures and a website with information for both consumers and medical professionals. There will also be promotional events held in several cities across the country designed to generate greater awareness of the importance of proper medication disposal and the harmful effects it can have on the environment and public health. The initiative will begin with a pilot program in selected U.S. markets later this year and expanded in 2008.

APhA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service say just three small steps can make a huge difference:

1. **DO NOT FLUSH** unused medications. Consumers were once advised to flush their expired or unused medications; however, recent environmental impact studies report that this could be having an adverse impact on the environment. While the rule of thumb is not to flush, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has determined that certain medications should be flushed due to their abuse potential. Read the instructions on your medication and talk to your pharmacist.

2. When tossing unused medications, protect children and pets from the potentially negative effects. APhA recommends that consumers:

- Crush solid medications or dissolve them in water (this applies for liquid medications as well) and mix with kitty litter or sawdust (or any material that absorbs the dissolved medication and makes it less appealing for pets or children to eat), then place in a sealed plastic bag **BEFORE** tossing in the trash.
- Remove and destroy **ALL** identifying personal information (prescription label) from the medication container.
- Check for approved state and local collection programs or with area hazardous waste facilities. In certain states, you may be able to take your unused medications to your community pharmacy.

3. **Talk To Your Pharmacist.** Research shows that pharmacists are one of the most accessible healthcare professionals. As the medication experts on the healthcare team, pharmacists are available to guide you on how to properly dispose of your unused medications.

Following these simple steps can help protect your family and community, minimize a potential negative impact on the environment, and prevent the illegal diversion of unused medications.

About The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

About The American Pharmacists Association:

The American Pharmacists Association, founded in 1852 as the American Pharmaceutical Association, represents more than 60,000 practicing pharmacists, pharmaceutical scientists, student pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and others interested in advancing the profession. APhA, dedicated to helping all pharmacists improve medication use and advance patient care, is the first-established and largest association of pharmacists in the United States.