



www.upstatepoison.org

50 YEARS

Poison Prevention

Newsletter

March 2010

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL • 750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

MARCH IS POISON PREVENTION MONTH

Professional Education

FREE SEMINAR

Sponsored by the
Upstate New York Poison Center

PEDIATRIC NURSES TOXICOLOGY TEACHING DAY

MARCH 24, 2010

4 pm to 6 pm

Weiskotten Hall, Rm. 9295
Irving Ave., Syracuse, NY 13210

To register and for information
contact Lauri Foster:

315 464-7078 or fosterl@upstate.edu

Places you should have the 1-800-222-1222

- ✓ Have the number for the Poison Center visible by placing a sticker with the 1-800-222-1222 on the phone or putting a magnet with the number on the refrigerator.
- ✓ Pre-program the Poison Center number into your home and cell phones.
- ✓ Put a sticker with the 1-800-222-1222 number on the inside of your medicine cabinet.
- ✓ Post the Poison Center number in the garage, basement or utility shed any place where chemicals and cleaning products are stored.

Medicine Disposal Event

March 20, 2010

The Upstate New York Poison Center along with community partners the Prevention Network and Walgreens, will host a Medicine Disposal Event at Walgreens, 2329 James Street, Eastwood, NY on March 20th from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon.

We are providing an opportunity for residents of Onondaga County to dispose of expired/unwanted medications. Bring your expired/unwanted over-the-counter (OTC) medications, prescription drugs and controlled substances to Walgreens.

Please note we **will not accept** glass containers, or vials, mercury or sharps (syringes/needles).

Pharmaceuticals in the Drinking Water

Pharmaceuticals have been identified as one of the "emerging contaminants" in our environment. Recent studies by the Environmental Protection Agency, (EPA) have shown increases of pharmaceuticals are present in our waterways, including rivers, streams and sources of drinking water. Findings indicate that Pharmaceutical compounds are not being properly contained in the wastewater treatment process and are ending up in the environment and the water systems. The presence of trace levels of pharmaceutical in our drinking water has prompted the FDA to develop guidelines for proper disposal of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines.

Perhaps the most easily identified sources are the general practices of flushing drugs down the toilet. Drugs that are flushed down the toilet accumulate and increase in concentration over time, creating an environment health hazard to humans and aquatic life.

The increased media expose of this public health concern has prompted the need for educating the public how and where to properly dispose of unused, unwanted and orphaned pharmaceuticals. Government directed public health programs are poised /expected to address the issues, provide solutions for a change in behaviors to minimize the presence of pharmaceuticals as "emerging contaminants" in our environment.

Most people assume that the water we drink is safe because of the government regulated delivery system. For the most part this is true. However, the wastewater systems and sewage treatment plants in use today are not equipped to detect and remove the vast amount of potentially hazardous chemicals, pharmaceuticals and their by-products in our sewage systems to an acceptable level, before they are discharged into the environment.

Continued on page 3

DRUG DISPOSAL DAY



An opportunity for residents of Onondaga County to dispose of expired/ unwanted medications

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2010

Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Place: Walgreens
2329 James Street
Syracuse, NY 13206
(corner of James Street and Grant Blvd in Eastwood)

Items accepted for disposal:

Expired or unwanted over-the-counter medications,
prescription drugs and controlled substances

Items not accepted for disposal:

Glass containers or vials, mercury, sharps (syringes/needles)

For additional information:
www.upstatepoison.org

Sponsored by



It takes a conscious effort to be aware of the behaviors involving proper disposal of OTC's and pharmaceuticals. The general public is still of the mindset of flushing medicines down the toilet, mainly to prevent the occurrence of an unintentional poisoning or prescription abuse.

Now that we know that flushing drugs down the toilet is not the best way to dispose of drugs, we want people to avoid flushing drugs down the toilet and to learn the proper methods for disposal of drugs. Everyone has a personal responsibility to be a steward of the environment. We need to support every effort to reduce the presence of pharmaceuticals in our environment and drinking water.

New York State is now following the federal government's initiatives and is promoting a program for safe disposal with the "Don't Flush Your Drugs" campaign. The governor of New York, David Patterson, states, "It is critical that all New Yorkers do their part to protect the state's water sources" and that "while recognizing that the presence of pharmaceuticals in the water is a multi-faceted issue with no single solution or easy technological fix, all of us need to take precautionary action on the things we can affect immediately." Most of this information is available via the Don't Flush Your Drugs and New Your State DEC websites. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/45083.html>

Guidelines for Safe Disposal of Pharmaceuticals

The first alternative to flushing medications down the toilet is disposal in the trash.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) does offer guidelines for the proper disposal of prescription drugs stating:

- Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet or drain unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to do so. For information on drugs that should be flushed,

visit the FDA's website at <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm>

- To dispose of prescription drugs not labeled to be flushed, you may be able to take advantage of community drug take-back programs or other programs, such as household hazardous waste collection events, that collect drugs at a central location for proper disposal. Call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service and ask if a drug take-back program is available in your community.
- If a drug take-back or collection program is not available dispose medications in the trash.

Before placing your unwanted medicines in the trash, follow these steps:

- To avoid accidental or intentional misuse of drugs, treat medications (liquids and pills) by adding water and then salt, ashes, dirt, cat litter, coffee grounds, or another undesirable substance.
- Hide all medications in an outer container, such as sealable bag, box or plastic tub to prevent discovery and removal from the trash. Seal the container with strong tape.
- Dispose of drugs as close to your trash collection day as possible to avoid misuse and/or misdirection.
- Do not conceal discarded drugs in food to prevent consumption by scavenging humans, pets or wildlife.

Note: Be careful in handling medications. Some drugs can cause harm if handled by people other than those to whom they were prescribed. Also, avoid crushing pills as some medications can be harmful in powder form.

Poison Prevention Safety Tips

Poisons are found inside and outside of your home. Common household cleaning and health and beauty products can be poisonous if used in the wrong way. Poisons can be things you drink, eat, breathe, touch or get in your eyes. Automotive products like anti-freeze, windshield cleaner, oils and cleaners are poisonous and should be kept out of the reach of children.

Always use products safely by reading and follow the directions for use and storage.

Here are some safety tips to keep your family safe:

- ✓ Use child-resistant caps whenever possible. Too much medicine or the wrong medicine can hurt or even kill you. Lock up medicines out of the reach of children.
- ✓ When you take medicine or give medicine, read the label every time. Use the dropper or medicine spoon that comes with the product. Never use household measuring spoons. Keep track of when medicine has been taken.
- ✓ Store all dangerous products away from food and drinks.
- ✓ Watch out for products with fruit shown on the labels. Children might think they are okay to drink.
- ✓ Keep medicines and cleaning products in their original containers with the original labels intact.
- ✓ Lock all dangerous items and products in a cabinet. Cosmetics (make-up) can be poison too.
- ✓ Have child safety caps on all chemicals, medications and cleaning products.
- ✓ Put them in a cabinet with a child safety lock.
- ✓ Take all medicines and medical supplies out of purses, pockets and drawers.
- ✓ Look for these words on bottles and packages: "Caution", "Warning", "Poison," "Danger" or "Keep Out of Reach of Children."
- ✓ Read the labels of the products you use in your home.
- ✓ Know the things in your home that are poisons.

CALLING AREA FOR THE UPSTATE NEW YORK POISON CENTER



A Service of the State University of
New York Upstate Medical University at
University Hospital, Syracuse.

Unintentional Poisoning Can Happen To You...At Any Age!

To receive your **FREE** telephone stickers, magnets, and information brochures, dial 1-800-222-1222 ask for the Health Educator at The Upstate New York Poison Center.