

Prescription drug abuse is the nation's fastest growing drug problem, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have classified prescription drug abuse as an epidemic



**People are abusing prescription drugs at an alarmingly high rate.**

In 2019, 18 million Americans misused prescription drugs, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Over half of those people who abused prescription drugs got them from friends or relatives.

Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2019



This brochure was created by the **WasteNot Project**

It is a cooperative effort between:

Flathead County Solid Waste District  
Flathead City/County Health Department  
Flathead County Sheriff's Office  
Northwest Montana Drug Task Force  
City of Whitefish Police Department  
City of Columbia Falls Police Department  
Flathead Basin Commission  
Flathead Valley Community College  
Service Learning Program  
Citizens for a Better Flathead

Visit the WasteNot website  
**[www.WasteNotProject.org](http://www.WasteNotProject.org)**  
For more information on recycling and reducing waste in the Flathead

Contact WasteNot at **756-8993**  
with additional questions

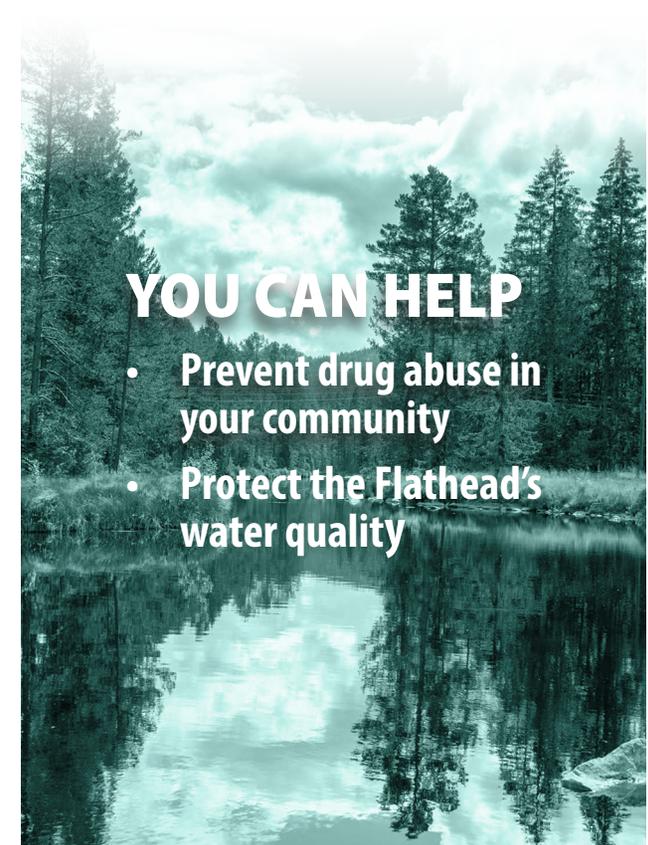


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# Pharmaceutical Waste in the Flathead

QUICK AND EASY DISPOSAL OPTIONS



## YOU CAN HELP

- Prevent drug abuse in your community
- Protect the Flathead's water quality

## What you flush or pour down your drain may affect local rivers, lakes, and groundwater



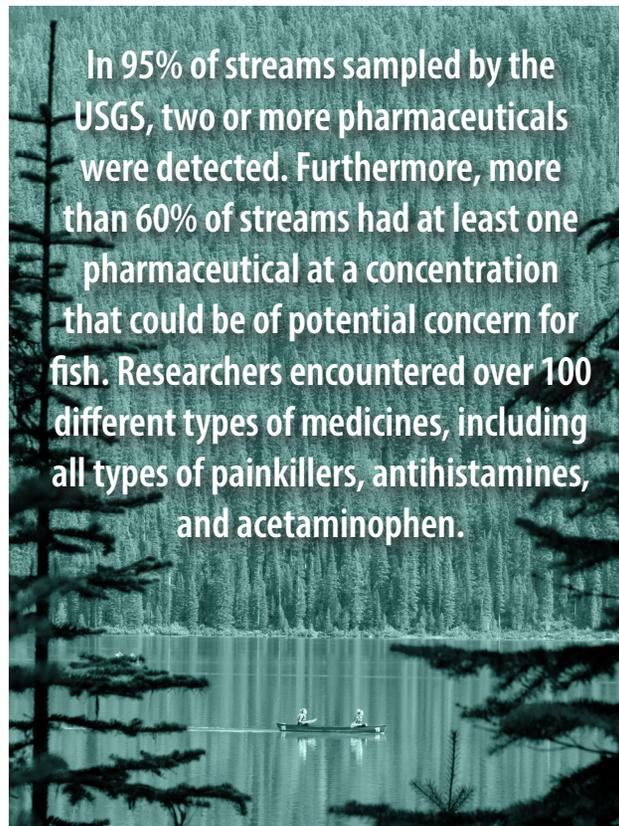
### DO NOT FLUSH unused medications and DO NOT POUR them down a sink or

When you flush medications down a toilet or pour them down a drain they can easily enter surface water or groundwater because they are, for the most part, not removed by septic systems or by community sewer systems.

The amount of total unwanted medicine is significant. Studies estimate that between 30 and 80 percent of patients do not finish prescribed medicine.

In 2016, 46% of adult Americans took at least one prescription medicine in a month. Between 2006 and 2012, over 76 billion prescription painkillers were prescribed to Americans.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics. Therapeutic Drug Use, 2013-2016.



In 95% of streams sampled by the USGS, two or more pharmaceuticals were detected. Furthermore, more than 60% of streams had at least one pharmaceutical at a concentration that could be of potential concern for fish. Researchers encountered over 100 different types of medicines, including all types of painkillers, antihistamines, and acetaminophen.

Source: United States Geological Survey. Multi-region assessment of pharmaceutical exposures and predicted effects in USA wadeable urban-gradient streams, 2020.

### Recent studies have begun to show the potential for ecosystem damage from pharmaceutical accumulation.

Scientists found that when European perch were exposed to even trace levels of an anti-anxiety medication commonly found in waterways around the world, the fish became less social and had altered feeding behavior.

This is a problem that affects Flathead County waterways. Endocrine disruptor compounds, pharmaceuticals and personal care products were detected in 13 of the 14 shallow groundwater wells that were sampled in 2010 by the Flathead Lake Biological Station in the Flathead River Drainage.

## How to Safely Dispose of Unwanted Medicines in Flathead County

Flushing drugs adds to the pollution in our waters, as wastewater and septic systems are not designed to treat these chemicals. Use these safe, easy, and eco-friendly alternatives:

### Drop-Off Boxes

#### Kalispell:

Flathead County Justice Center - 920 Main St.  
Walgreens Pharmacy - 40 W Idaho St.  
The Clinical Pharmacy - 200 Conway Dr.  
Medical Arts Pharmacy - 209 Conway Dr.  
Family Health Care - 1287 Burns Way  
Sykes Pharmacy - 202 2nd Ave W

#### Columbia Falls:

Police Station - 130 6th St. W

#### Whitefish:

Whitefish Police Station - 275 Flathead Ave  
Alpine Apothecary - Inside Super 1 Foods

### If you are unable to make it to a drop-off box, please follow these steps as a last resort:

1. Dump medicines out of their container into a resealable bag
2. Pour enough water into the bag to let the medicines dissolve
3. Add an absorbent, like kitty litter, coffee grounds, or sawdust and mix together
4. Seal bag and place in a garbage container out of reach of children and pets

