Medication Pollution – We All Live Downstream

Think about it. We all live downstream. Everything we dump down the sink, or flush down the toilet enters our water supply. When you fill that cup from the tap, how many pharmaceuticals do you think are in the water?

Medications are manufactured and sold as over the counter drugs, prescription drugs, and drugs developed for use only within a medical setting (such as vaccines, anesthesia, and drugs used for medical tests). Last year, 4,002,661,750 prescriptions were filled in the United States. Yes, that's more than 4 billion, 2 million prescriptions. And these were just the prescriptions. Approximately 2.9 billion trips were made to the pharmacy or other retail store to buy over the counter drugs. So all in all, Americans purchased close to 7 billion drugs last year, not counting the medications used in hospitals and clinics.

In households, medications accumulate. In the typical medicine cabinet you will find a combination of drugs:

- Medications currently prescribed and taken on a daily or on an as needed basis.
- Medications purchased over-the-counter to be used if/when needed.
- Prescriptions partially used due to patient non-compliance or a change in prescription.
- And all too often – a full collection of outdated medications!

Prescription and over-the-counter medications are dangerous. If they are not kept under lock and key, the risk of medications being taken by others is great. Small children mimic their parents. Pre-teens and teens experiment. And children of the household are not the only possible culprits.

Their friends will surely check out your medicine cabinet, if given the chance. In fact, it isn't that uncommon for adult visitors to steal a few pills here and there.

Obviously, it is best to dispose of unused and expired drugs, but all too often they are flushed down the toilet. Even if we didn't dispose of them improperly, drugs would end up in our water. Whatever drugs we take are excreted in urine and feces. This is true for both humans and animals. Now that conventional factory farming has become the standard, these over-crowded, inhumane meat and dairy factories are filled with animals that are injected and fed hormones to speed up growth and fed antibiotics to survive their abysmal, unhealthy conditions. The waste runoff goes into groundwater and contaminates nearby creeks and rivers.

In addition, many medications come in the form of creams and salves. These are also washed down the drain along with all of the chemicals contained in our personal care products, our cleaning supplies, soaps, and laundry detergents.

All chemicals in the water are beginning to be a problem. Though all sorts of pharmaceuticals are found in our water (antibiotics, hormones, psychiatric drugs, heart medications, and more), the experts say the levels are not yet high enough to affect us, but they are high enough to affect aquatic life. This is a problem in itself and also a sure sign that the levels are rising and will soon become a health concern.

Some pharmaceutical companies allow nursing homes and hospitals to return meds. But what are we supposed to do?

You can check with your county government or city government to ask if they have a medication disposal program in place. They may have an ongoing program or like our county, have a bi-annual medication disposal day. While a twice a year program does help keep meds out of the water, it does little to keep excess medications out of the home.

Check with you pharmacy to see what programs they may have in place. Walgreens and CVS both sell envelopes for $3.99 to ship non-controlled substances to a disposal facility where the unopened envelope is incinerated. And although they say they do not open the envelopes, you are not supposed to send in controlled substances.

Some argue that the cost, the lack of availability, and the emissions from incinerating medications make throwing meds away a better option. They suggest emptying pills and mixing them with nasty garbage to discourage anyone from picking through garbage to retrieve pills.

It’s too bad the obscenely rich pharmaceutical companies are not required by law to take back unused and expired medications for disposal for free. But with their track record of deceit and corruption, they would probably just repackage them for resell.

If you’ve decided to clean up your act and dispose of all your unneeded medications please do not flush them. Either find a program of throw them away.

If you want to get off of pharmaceuticals and leave the conventional medical model behind, true health starts with a nutrient dense, whole food, plant-based diet consisting of 80% fresh, raw, organic produce, more vegetables than fruits. Include healthy fats; they are essential. If you choose to eat meat, choose only organic meats to avoid antibiotics, hormones, and meat from animals that were fed GMO feed and raised in inhumane conditions. Avoid all artificial flavors, colors, and preservatives. Avoid processed sugar, MSG, artificial sweeteners, and all genetically modified foods. Eliminate cow dairy and gluten as well if you suffer from any kind of auto-immune disease or chronic condition.

Further Reading:

- *80% Raw Food Diet*

- *How to Detoxify From Antibiotics and Other Chemical Antimicrobials*
- *What's the Best Water for Detoxifying and For Drinking?*
- *Symptoms of Dehydration & Benefits of Proper Hydration – Are you Getting Enough Water?*

Sources:

- *Economic Impact: The Biopharmaceutical Industry Helps Strengthen the U.S. Economy* – PhRMA
- *Total Number of Retail Prescription Drugs Filled at Pharmacies* – The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
- *Statistics on OTC Use* – Consumer Healthcare Products Association
- *Best Disposal Method for Old Medications Found* – livescience