

From the NY State Education Department

Medication Disposal Recommendations

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is advising New Yorkers to discontinue the practice of flushing medication as a method of disposal. In the past flushing was considered a safe disposal practice to insure the medications did not end up in the wrong hands. Now new scientific methods have allowed scientists to detect low levels of medication residue in water systems. Uncertainty of the effect of these low levels on fish, wild life, and humans is the reason behind the new disposal methods.

Schools should keep in mind that when the parents allow the child to be administered the medication during the school day, that the school is only taking temporary and incidental possession of the medication. The medication belongs to the parent, and schools must strongly encourage parents to pick up any unused medications. If the parents do not pick up the unused medication, the nurse should document that the medication is abandoned in the student's cumulative health record, and dispose of the medication using the method described below.

Currently the DEC recommends that schools dispose of medications in the trash. The medications should be placed in a container and mixed with water, salt, coffee grounds, cat litter, or ashes to enhance the destruction of the medication. The container should be sealed with tape. Care should be taken to ensure students do not have access to the trash. Larger districts may want to consider using a company specializing in commercial pick up of medical waste. Detailed instructions and suggestions are available on the NYS DEC website at:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/45083.html>