



Learn What You
Can Do To Prevent
Pharmaceutical
Pollution

[www.teleosis.org/
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Facts on Pharmaceuticals and the Environment

- **80% of the 139 U. S. streams tested were contaminated with organic wastewater contaminants (OWCs), including pharmaceuticals (hormones, steroids, antibiotics, and other prescription drugs as well as nonprescription drugs).**

[USGS. Pharmaceuticals, hormones, and other organic wastewater contaminants in U. S. streams, 1999-2000: A national reconnaissance. *Environmental Science & Technology*. 2002; 3(6):1202-1211] and [toxics.usgs.gov/pubs/FS-027-02/pdf/FS-027-02.pdf. Accessed 11/1/06.]

- **Medications are discontinued by physicians 27% of the time because they are no longer needed or suitable for the patient.**

[Paone RP, Cogenberg FR, Caporello E, Ruthkowski J, Parent R, Fchetti F. Medication destruction and waste measurement and management in long-term care facilities. *Consultant Pharmacist*. 1996;11(1). Available from: <http://www.ascp.com/public/pubs/tcp/1996/jan/mdwm.html>. Accessed September 15, 2006.]

- **Costs associated with long-term care facilities' unused medications are between 4%-10% of the total dispensed costs.**

Congressman Tim Murphy Web site: RX: Healthcare FYI #10/Stop wasting prescription drugs. 2005. Available at <http://murphy.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=26255>. Accessed 11/04/06

- **90% of medication waste results from "discontinuation or change in medication or death, transfer, or hospitalization of the resident."**

AMA. 2001. Report 2 of the Council on Scientific Affairs (I-97) Full Text: Recycling of Nursing Home Drugs. Chicago: American Medical Association. Available at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/13655.html>. Accessed August 30, 2006.

- **In a survey on pharmaceutical waste pollution, only 1.4% of people returned medications to a pharmacy; 54% disposed of medications in the garbage; 35.4% flushed medications down the toilet or sink.**

Columbia University Web site. Pollution prevention measures for unwanted pharmaceuticals 2005. Available at http://www.seas.columbia.edu/earth/wtert/sofos/Gualtero_IETerm.pdf. Accessed November 1, 2006.

- **For medications that are not returnable: 15% are incinerated; 17% are directed to hazardous waste handlers; 68% are disposed to solid waste or the toilet.**

Kuspis DA, Krenzelok EP. What happens to expired medications? *Veterinary and Human Toxicology*. 1996;38(1):48-49.

- **Reducing a prescription's supply to 28 days could reduce the need for discarding by as much as 30%.**

Blanchard B. 1998. Medication wasteland: Can we care for the environment as our patient? Toronto: Pharmacy Practice, Rogers Media. Available at: <http://www.pharmacygateway.ca/pastissue/content/phpractice/1998/11-98/php119804b.jsp>. Accessed September 3, 2006.