



# *drinking*

# WATER *protection program*

## HOW TO PROTECT YOUR DRINKING WATER: **PHARMACEUTICAL DISPOSAL PRACTICES**

Trace amounts of pharmaceuticals and other personal care products (also known as PPCPs) are being detected in our nation's water and drinking water systems. These substances, such as antibiotics, caffeine, or aspirin, may end up in the environment through human or animal waste, runoff from animal feeding operations, or by improper disposal from flushing medicines down the toilet. Much information exists on these substances for therapeutic doses, but little data exists on the potential effects on public health or aquatic life in the low doses that are now being recognized in our waterways.

Currently, the Environmental Protection Agency has not set maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for these substances in drinking water. However, environmental and health agencies are concerned and believe that more work needs to be done to evaluate the health and environmental impacts of these substances. For more information on this topic, refer to the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Geological Survey, the American Waterworks Association, and the US Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Subcommittee on Transportation, Infrastructure, Security, and Water Quality.

### **THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES FOR PROPER DISPOSAL OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS:**

- Take unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs out of their original containers and throw them in the trash.
- Mix prescription drugs with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter, and put them in impermeable, non-descript containers, such as empty cans or sealable bags.
- Flush prescription drugs down the toilet only if the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs doing so (see right column).
- Take advantage of community pharmaceutical take-back programs that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. These programs are a good way to dispose of unused pharmaceuticals.

The FDA advises that the following drugs be flushed down the toilet instead of thrown in the trash:

- Actiq<sup>®</sup> (fentanyl citrate)
- Daytrana<sup>™</sup> Transdermal Patch (fentanyl)
- Duragesic<sup>®</sup> Transdermal System (fentanyl)
- OxyContin<sup>®</sup> Tablets (oxycodone)
- Avinza<sup>®</sup> Capsules (morphine sulfate)
- Baraclude<sup>®</sup> Tablets (entecavir)
- Reyataz<sup>®</sup> Capsules (atazanavir sulfate)
- Tequin<sup>®</sup> Tablets (gatifloxacin)
- Zerit<sup>®</sup> for Oral Solution (stavudine)
- Demerol<sup>®</sup> (meperidine HCl tablets)
- Percocet<sup>®</sup> (oxycodone and acetaminophen)
- Xyrem<sup>®</sup> (sodium oxybate)
- Fentora<sup>®</sup> (fentanyl buccal tablet)

Note: Patients should always refer to printed material accompanying their medication for specific instructions. For more information please visit [www.epa.gov/ppcp/](http://www.epa.gov/ppcp/) or [www.deq.louisiana.gov](http://www.deq.louisiana.gov). This document was published at a total cost of \$256.60 at \$0.26 per copy for 1000 copies, including all printings, by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, PO Box 4301, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4301, to provide the public with environmental information in accordance with La.R.S.30:2011, using standards for printing by state agencies pursuant to La.R.S.43:31.