



Multiple Benefits to DEA's Prescription Take-Back

Drop Points Were Set Up Across the Country To Curb Prescription Drug Abuse

By T.J. WINICK

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The Drug Enforcement Agency [made a push this weekend to empty out the excess pills](#) in medicine cabinets across the country, setting up approximately 4,000 "take-back" drop-off points nationwide, where citizens can safely dispose of their unused, expired and unwanted medication.

The DEA's new initiative is an effort to combat one of America's fastest growing drug problems, where kids seek to get high not on drugs they get on the streets but on those they find in their own homes.

"Kids are having parties these days where that's the topic of the party, prescription drugs," says Officer Steve Quintano of the Dumont, N.J., police department.

Outside of Seattle, nine teens wound up in the hospital this past week after anti-depressants and painkillers were passed around at a school bus stop.

In Philadelphia recently an 18-year-old accidentally overdosed on pain-killers.

"Someone gave him additional pain medication from their own medicine cabinet that tragically ended my son's life," said Bernie Strain, whose son Tim died last summer.

Laurie Decrescenzo told ABC News she's had several bottles of prescription drugs in her home for nearly 30 years.

"I didn't know what to do with them so I just pushed them to the back of my cabinet," Decrescenzo said.

"This effort symbolizes DEA's commitment to halting the disturbing rise in addiction caused by their misuse and abuse," DEA Acting Administrator Michele Leonhart said.

A similar drug take-back program sponsored by the DEA and local officials took place in New Jersey last year. Roughly 9,000 pounds of medicine, valued at \$35 million, was collected during the drive.

Properly disposing of medications in a timely manner also makes the water we use in our homes every day safer.

Not all prescription drugs are found in the medicine cabinet. Trace amounts of everything from birth control to anti-depressants can wind up in the public water supply when they're disposed of improperly.

Another Benefit to DEA's Prescription Drug Take-Back?

The concern is that scientists don't know what these chemicals do in the body over a lifetime of exposure.

That's why the Environmental Protection Agency is working with states and companies like United Water in New Jersey to learn more about the health effects.

Now researchers want the pharmaceutical industry on board.

At least one drug company still advises its customers -- on those bottle labels -- to flush leftover medication down the toilet, where water experts say it eventually winds up back in our drinking water.

The DEA is updating its list of drug drop-off points regularly at its [website, www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov) to provide the public with further information on the initiative.

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