



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Office of the Attorney General

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For Immediate Release

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Attorney General's Office of Consumer Counsel, the Bureau of Environmental Health, and the Community Health Center Department of Public Health would like to remind the public to never take unknown medicine, especially medicine found in public places.

Many drugs may have harmful side-effects that can lead to medical problems and death. Unknown containers of medication can also be subject to contamination and tampering. Prescription medication should only be taken if prescribed by a qualified health professional, and should only be taken as prescribed. Drugs are also subject to expiration.

Unused and expired drugs should always be disposed of promptly and properly. Each year, the DEA extends a drug take-back program in the CNMI. Drug take-back programs are the recommended methods for safe disposal of unused and expired medications; however, they may not always be available.

The Federal Drug Administration suggests following these safety steps to safely dispose of unused medication:

- (1) Check the product package insert to see if there are special instructions on disposal
- (2) For disposing in household trash:
 - Mix medicines (do not crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as dirt, cat litter, or used coffee grounds;
 - Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag;
 - Throw the container in household trash;
 - Delete all personal information on the prescription label of empty pill bottles or medicine packaging, then dispose of the container
- (3) Certain medicines should be flushed immediately if drug take-back options are not readily available because of the potential for harm that can include serious health risks and even death with just one ingestion if not properly prescribed

For additional information, please visit:

<https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm>

You can also contact BEH at (670) 664-4870/2/3/, or email John Tagabuel, Director of BEH, at john.tagabuel@dph.gov.mp or the OAG, Lawrence Pangelinan, Chief Investigator of AGID, at (670) 237-7600, lawrence_pangelinan@cnmioag.org, or Michele Harris, Consumer Counsel, at (670) 237-7500, michele_harris@cnmioag.org.

*The FDA recognizes certain potential harm in flushing dangerous medicines when a take-back program is not readily available. The FDA has conducted research on the harmful environmental effects of flushing and concluded that the risk is negligible. The FDA believes that the known risk of harm, including death, to humans from accidental exposure to certain medicines, especially potent opioid medicines, far outweighs any potential risk to humans or the environment from flushing when a take-back program is not available.

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