What can I do?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends that you do **NOT** flush unused or expired pharmaceutical drugs down your toilet or drain unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to do so.

Please review this important information the next time you receive your prescription or visit the FDA's Web site at www.fda.gov and search for "disposal by flushing."

If you can dispose of your pharmaceutical drugs through the trash, you should remove the medication from the bottle, crush and/or mix with kitty litter or coffee grounds, then place into a container or plastic, re-sealable bag and discard with your regular trash.

Protect your personal information by removing or making the patient's name nonreadable before recycling the bottle.

If you live in Montgomery County and need more information, go to **montgomerycountymd.gov** and search "prescription drugs" or call the county's Division of Solid Waste Services at 240-777-6410.

If you live in Prince George's County, contact the county's Waste Management Group at 301-883-5969. The county also suggests that you contact your pharmacy to see if they take part in an expired/unused prescription medication take-back program.

WSSC's Mission

We are entrusted by our community to provide safe and reliable water, life's most precious resource, and return clean water to our environment, all in an ethically and financially responsible manner.

WSSC

14501 Sweitzer Lane, Laurel, MD 20707

Established in 1918, today WSSC is the 8th largest water and wastewater utility in the nation, with a network of more than 5,500 miles of fresh water pipeline and nearly 5,400 miles of sewer pipeline. Serving 1.8 million residents in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties our drinking water has always met or exceeded federal standards.

www.wsscwater.com
Communications & Community Relations Office
301.206.8100

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Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

Pharmaceutical Drugs and Drinking Water

What You Need to Know About Trace Amounts in Tap Water

In 2008, the Associated Press reported that trace amounts of several pharmaceutical drugs were found in the nation's drinking water. These pharmaceutical products, after being used by people, eventually find their way into the water supplies. The AP story also highlights how advances in technology now allow water industry researchers to detect more substances—at extremely low, trace levels—than ever before.

WSSC and our partners in the industry have been closely tracking this issue for the past several years.

The fact that a substance is detectable does not mean its presence is harmful to people. To date, research has not demonstrated an impact on human health from pharmaceuticals in drinking water when found at these incredibly low, trace levels.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions about the issue:

Is my drinking water safe?

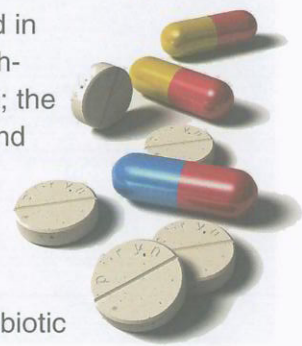
WSSC's water is safe because it meets or exceeds all safe drinking water standards. For more than 90 years, WSSC has always met or exceeded—and continues to meet or exceed—prevailing federal and state drinking water standards.

The best research to date does not demonstrate that there is a human health risk due to the extremely low levels of pharmaceuticals that may sometimes be present in drinking water.

According to the National Science Foundation, certified home water treatment systems are not specifically certified to reduce pharmaceuticals at this time, but these products may be helpful in reducing many impurities.

Bottled water manufacturers are monitored with less frequency than public water agencies and use a variety of treatment processes. Contact the manufacturers for more information.

What kinds of drugs are being found?



The drugs that were found in trace amounts in the Washington area were: caffeine; the pain relievers Ibuprofen and Naproxen; Triclocarban, a disinfectant found in soap; Monensin, an antibiotic given to cattle; Sulfamethoxazole, an antibiotic used to treat infections; cotinine, a nicotine breakdown by-product; and Carbamazepine, an anti-seizure drug.

At what levels?

These drugs were all found in extremely small amounts, in parts per billion or parts per trillion. People regularly consume or expose themselves to products containing various drugs in much higher concentrations through medicines, foods, beverages and other sources. The levels in which they are found in drinking water are incredibly minute by comparison.

For example, in the case of one of the pharmaceuticals that are most commonly found in drinking water sources, Carbamazepine, a person would have to drink more than 5,000 glasses of water a day to reach the limit of what is considered to be acceptable.

What is WSSC doing about this issue?

WSSC and other water utilities have funded leading industry research on water quality for many years. WSSC makes significant annual financial contributions to agencies such as the Water Research Foundation (WRF) and the Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF) to support their research projects, which include leading research on the issue of pharmaceuticals in water.

WSSC will continue to support and monitor research on this issue. We will take prudent steps, as warranted, to ensure that we are providing safe, clean water to the community.