

Drug Take Back

Convenience will be the main attraction on March 22, a Friday, when the Lawrence County Drug Coalition hosts its third drug “Takeback Day,” at Lawrence County Memorial Hospital’s Primary Care Clinic, 2111 Lexington Ave.

Those who want to turn in unused prescription medicine will be able to do so without even exiting their vehicles.

“Our hope is for us to have someone waiting at the front door,” said Gene Allen, manager of the clinic. “When they drive up under the awning, they won’t even have to get out of their vehicle. A (law enforcement) officer will be there to take their medication and dispose of it correctly.”

Anonymity will be a top priority, according to Allen, and no questions will be asked.

“You just bring it in, and drop it in the box,” Allen said. “That’s all there is to it. It’s free and it’s anonymous.”

Allen said the takeback day is an attempt to reduce addiction among Lawrence Countians, especially among teens.

“If you don’t have it around, they don’t have a chance to get it,” he said.

Statistics say, according to Allen, that most people who become addicted to prescription medication get started by digging through medicine cabinets in their homes, or the homes of family or friends.

“A lot of us have medicine that we don’t use,” he said. “It sits in the cabinet for months, if not years, and collects, and that’s how a lot of kids become addicted.”

The drug coalition, which was formed in January of 2018, will be holding a takeback day for the third time.

“It’s something we want to do two or three times a year,” said Allen, a coalition officer. “We’ve had great success with the other two.”

A takeback day aims to provide a safe, convenient and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications.

A 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 6.2 million Americans misused controlled prescription drugs, mostly from family and friends, frequently via the home medicine cabinet.

Even if someone can’t take advantage of the takeback day, they are urged to find a way to carefully dispose of prescription medications. This is to prevent others from consuming them, either deliberately or by accident.

Throwing medications in the trash doesn’t guarantee they won’t end up in the mouths of others. One option is to wrap the medications in a sealed plastic bag with something that’s undesirable, such as dirty diapers, kitty litter or used coffee grounds, and place them securely in a trash receptacle. Prescription bottle labels should be removed, unless you want others to know what you’ve been taking.

Flushing medications down the toilet or the sink is not a good option, experts say. Both are connected to the water system and, essentially, the environment. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration offers a list of medications that may be flushed down the toilet, if there absolutely no other recourse.

Takeback days, such as the one being put on by the drug coalition, are much safer. Local law enforcement will take measures to ensure that the drugs are disposed of properly.

Doctors and pharmacists may also have tips about how to properly get rid of the medicines they provide. Patients are asked to finish the full prescription, if possible, and to try not to get more medications than are really needed. Keeping pain medications and psychoactive substances around, especially, can be dangerous and too tempting.

In 2010, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, enough pharmaceuticals were prescribed to medicate every American adult around-the-clock for one month. Some of these prescriptions and over the counter drugs decay in the home and are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse, and abuse. The center says that often, more Americans currently abuse prescription drugs than the number of those using cocaine, hallucinogens, heroin, and inhalants combined, according to the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Studies show that the majority of teens who abuse prescription drugs obtain them from family or friends for free, including from the home medicine cabinet. The center stresses that improper disposal methods can pose both safety and environmental hazards.

Four days following the DEA's first Take-Back Day on Sept. 25, 2010, Congress approved legislation that amended the Controlled Substances Act. This action provided the DEA with the option to develop a permanent process for people to safely and conveniently dispose of their prescription drugs. After October 12, President Obama signed the Safe and Secure Drug Disposal Act of 2010, and the DEA immediately began installing regulations for a more permanent solution.

The DEA's Takeback events are also a reflection of the President's prescription drug abuse prevention strategy entitled "Epidemic: Responding to America's Prescription Drug Abuse Crisis" developed and promoted by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Ridding medicine cabinets of unused or expired medications in American homes is one of the four main items addressed the strategy for reducing diversion prescription drug abuse. The other action items include educating the public as well as health care providers. In turn, this system establishes prescription drug monitoring programs in all the states.