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Release

Drug Take Back Initiative helps prevent prescription drug abuse



On Saturday, Sept. 12 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Uniontown Hospital Police will collaborate with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to participate in the eighth annual Drug Take Back Day. The event gives area residents the chance to prevent prescription drug abuse and theft by permitting them to freely and safely dispose of expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs.

Through the DEAs Office of Diversion Control, millions of pounds of prescription drugs have been properly discarded since the inception of the Take Back Initiative, with more than 5,000 take back sites receiving unwanted prescription medications nationwide each year.

“This is a great opportunity to clean out your medicine cabinets,” William Johnson, RPh, PharmD, said. “Medications are often kept, ‘just in case,’ they may be needed in the future. This can be a bad idea.”

Johnson, who is the director of the Uniontown Hospital Pharmacy, said that keeping unused and unwanted medications in the medicine cabinet can be harmful for several reasons.

- Drugs degrade over time and therefore may not be effective or actually be harmful when taken months or years later.
- Drugs prescribed for an illness today may not be the best choice to treat a similar problem in the future and may make the condition worse.

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- Drugs prescribed for one person may not be the best option for another person and may actually be harmful.
- Keeping unnecessary drugs increases the potential for a child, another person or a pet to suffer or die from drug poisoning or overdose. Research has shown that while the number of poisoning in children has steadily declined since the late 1970's, the percentage of all child poisoning deaths due to medications has nearly doubled.
- Disposing of medications by flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash can cause damage to the environment. Several studies have begun to detect trace amounts of harmful medications in our streams and rivers.

“This program has been met with exception community support in recent years, with more than 100 pounds of outdated and unwanted prescription medications collected last year alone,” said Josh Krysak, coordinator of Community Relations at Uniontown Hospital. “As illegal drug use continues to be an issue in Fayette County, this program also affords residents the opportunity to take a proactive step toward lessening their risk of being a target for potential criminal activity, like burglaries.”

Police officers from Uniontown Hospital will be available Saturday to monitor the drop off box and to assist anyone wishing to dispose of medications. Area residents are encouraged to bring medications for disposal to the Main Lobby of the hospital at 500 West Berkeley Street, Uniontown. Only prescription and over-the-counter tablets and capsules will be accepted. No prescription bottles or labels will be collected to protect privacy. The service is free and anonymous. No questions will be asked of participants.