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DEP AND DOH REMIND FLORIDIANS OF PROPER DISPOSAL METHODS FOR UNWANTED MEDICATIONS

--Proper disposal helps keep pharmaceuticals out of water--

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Florida Department of Health (DOH) are reminding Floridians to properly dispose of unwanted medications. Disposing with household trash rather than flushing down the toilet or a drain helps reduce the amount of pharmaceutical traces in Florida's water bodies and drinking water.

"Proper disposal of unwanted medications helps protect Florida's residents and visitors as well as our natural resources," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "Florida's drinking water utilities have an exemplary track record in delivering safe, affordable, high-quality, drinking water. We will continue to work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Geological Survey to study emerging chemicals and develop new criteria so that we can continue to ensure safe water for generations to come."

Many medications contain compounds, also known as microconstituents, that are used to enhance our quality of life by protecting human health, enhancing consumer goods, and optimizing agricultural production. Microconstituents may be found in very low concentrations in surface water, ground water, domestic wastewater, industrial wastewater, agricultural runoff, reclaimed water, and other waters.

"While the issue of pharmaceuticals and personal care products in water is not new, current media coverage on the topic may prompt concern among consumers," said State Surgeon General Ana Viamonte Ros, MD, MPH. "So far, these chemicals have been found at extremely low concentrations and current research has not demonstrated an impact on human health at the trace levels at which they have been found."

The amount of microconstituents can be reduced by properly disposing of unwanted medications. While flushing them down the toilet or a drain prevents immediate accidental ingestion, it can impact our environment because many wastewater treatment systems, including septic tanks, are not designed to remove many of these medications. To properly dispose of unwanted household medications:

1. Keep the medicines in the original container. This will help identify the contents if they are accidentally ingested.
2. Mark out your name and prescription number for safety.
3. For pills, add water or soda to start dissolving them. For liquids, add something inedible like cat litter, dirt or cayenne pepper.
4. Close the lid and secure with duct or packing tape.
5. Place the bottle(s) inside an opaque container like a coffee can or plastic laundry

bottle.

6. Tape that container closed.

7. Hide the container in the trash. Do not put in the recycle bin.

Disposal of unwanted medications from commercial facilities such as pharmacies, medical facilities and veterinary operations are subject to different regulations than those that apply to medications from household uses. Those commercial facilities should contact DEP's Division of Waste Management for guidance.

For more information on the proper disposal of unwanted medications, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/waste/categories/medications/default.htm>.