



HEALTH CARE ALERT

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION PROVIDING HEALTH CARE TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND/OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND THEIR SUPPORT TEAMS

Risk Management Corner

What should you do with your unused medications?

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) worked with the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to develop the first consumer guidance for proper disposal of prescription drugs. The ONDCP federal guidelines were first issued in February 2007. The 2009 version of the federal guidelines is available at http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/prescrip\_disposal.pdf.



The latest guidelines (2009) are as follows:

Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet or drain unless the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs you to do so. For information on drugs that should be flushed visit the FDA’s website at http://www.fda.gov.

To dispose of prescription drugs not labeled to be flushed you may be able to take advantage of a community drug take-back program or other programs, such as household hazardous waste collection events, that collect drugs at a central location for proper disposal. Call your city or county government’s household trash and recycling service and ask if a drug take-back program is available in your community.

If a drug take-back or collection program is not available:

- 1. Take your prescription drugs out of their original containers.
2. Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds.
3. Put the mixture into a disposable container with a lid, such as an empty margarine tub, or into a sealable bag.
4. Conceal or remove any personal information, including Rx number, on the empty containers by covering it with black permanent marker or duct tape, or by scratching it off.
5. Place the sealed container with the mixture, and the empty drug containers, in the trash.

Office of National Drug Control Policy
750 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20503

MEDICINES RECOMMENDED FOR DISPOSAL BY FLUSHING

The FDA does allow some flushing of medications. The FDA tells you what unused or expired medicines you should flush down the sink or toilet to help prevent danger to people and pets in the home. Flushing these medicines will get rid of them right away and help keep your family and pets safe. The current list was last revised in March 2010 and can be located at:

http://www.fda.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou/consumers/buyingusingmedicinesafely/ensuringsafeuseofmedicine/safedisposalofmedicines/ucm186187.htm

The FDA continually evaluates medicines for safety risks and will update the list as needed.

Resources

If you have additional questions about disposing of your medicine, please contact the FDA at 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332).

For specific drug product labeling information, go to DailyMed at http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/about.cfm or Drugs@FDA at http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/drugsatfda/

Table with 2 columns: County Name and Phone Number. Includes Bucks County, Chester County, Delaware County, Montgomery County, and Philadelphia County with their respective contact numbers.

Inside this issue:

Table listing contents: Unused Medication (Cover), Community Connections (2 & 3), Announcements (4).

\*To find out about other companies that provide home health care services, please contact your insurance company directly or contact PCHC for support.  
\*PCHC does not support or advocate for any one company. We share all of our resources to keep you fully informed.

## Medicare Enrollment Period



PCHC would like to remind Medicare “**only**” recipients that Medicare’s enrollment period is from November 15 until December 31. Within these seven weeks, all Medicare recipients can choose, change and compare plans. When you visit the newly designed Medicare website you will see information about Medicare health plans, Medigap policies, prescription drug plans, insurance coverage and costs. In addition, on the website you will find help with finding Medicare participating providers. If you have any questions and/or concerns you can call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY/TDD users

can call 1-877-486-2048 (24/7) and speak with a customer service representative. You can also visit and enroll on the official U.S Government website for Medicare at [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov). Due to recent changes, the site is easy to navigate and much more consumer friendly.



PCHC also wants to “alert” you that during enrollment period you may receive calls regarding your Medicare changes; therefore, please do not give your personal/health information to anyone. No one from Medicare will contact you to inquire about changes to your health care coverage. All correspondence sent from Medicare to you will be done so using a secure source, such as mail delivery. It is you, the recipient, who is responsible for contacting Medicare if you have any questions or concerns.

If you have any insurance questions call PCHC at 215-546-0300 (ext. 3387) or visit PCHC online at [www.PCHC.org](http://www.PCHC.org). You can submit your questions by going to the Health Insurance corner, completing the Health Insurance Question Form and clicking submit.

## Flu Shots, Local Pharmacies and Cost



As the change of seasons is upon us, we may begin to see advertisements for flu (also called, influenza or seasonal flu) shots all around us. Some advertisements may be noticed at CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid, neighborhood pharmacies, Health Departments (clinics) and even at organizations who may offer the flu shot for their employees.

**Is the flu shot safe?** The answer is yes, flu shots are very safe. They are made with dead viruses to fool your body into creating antibodies against flu-causing viruses. You should get a flu shot every year! The best time to get a flu shot is from early October to mid-November. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends the flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older.

**Who pays or how is the flu shot covered?** This depends on your health care provider and coverage. If you are a Medicare recipient only, your annual flu shot is free, as long as you have Medicare Part B and your health provider accepts Medicare assignments. You do not have to pay a “coinsurance or deductible”. Most Medicaid Managed Care Plans and straight Medicaid (a.k.a. MA/ACCESS) cover annual flu shots. Dual-eligible recipients’ flu shots are also fully covered. Most private insurance companies cover flu shots with their required co-pay. **PCHC** suggests and recommends contacting your health care provider regarding cost before scheduling an appointment for a flu shot.

*The resources shared by PCHC are for educational purposes only. You should always consult with your health care provider/ primary care physician before getting a flu shot or if you have any questions regarding your personal health care.*

# National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month! It is the month to take steps to prepare individuals, families, direct support professionals (DSPs), homes and agencies for any emergency and disasters of all types. Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care (PCHC) and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) have worked together to offer trainings on “Personal Preparedness”. The training will inform your agency, staff, and individuals on how to, get a kit, make a plan and be informed.



## ***We have to Plan Now, Work Together and Be Ready!***

Please contact PCHC to schedule a training by calling the Education Department at (215) 546-0300 (ext. 3206) or by filling out the *Training Request Form* located on PCHC’s website: [www.pchc.org](http://www.pchc.org) and faxing it to (215) 790-4976.

PCHC, the Health Care Quality Unit (HCQU) for Southeastern PA, suggests that you visit [www.readynotifypa.com](http://www.readynotifypa.com) if you wish to be notified by email, phone or pager about emergencies, severe weather, road closings, and crime in your area. To register you must choose the county you reside in and which notifications you would like to receive.

***Most important please volunteer.***

**For more resources visit:**

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

[www.buckscounty.org](http://www.buckscounty.org)

[www.readynotifypa.com](http://www.readynotifypa.com)

[www.montcopa.us](http://www.montcopa.us)

[www.oem.readyphiladelphia.org](http://www.oem.readyphiladelphia.org)

[www.co.delaware.pa.us](http://www.co.delaware.pa.us)

[www.phila.gov](http://www.phila.gov)



## By the time of our next Health Care Alert, winter will be here...



In addition to checking your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and having an indoor thermometer, now may be a good time to get out those coats, hats and scarves. While some enjoy the cold weather, others may find it stressful. Talk about it – if you are helping someone dress for the cold, ask them if what they are wearing is working to keep them warm and comfortable. If a person cannot verbally express this, watch for other signs – people who are cold may make faces, squint their eyes, hunch their shoulders, tighten their bodies, shiver, refuse to go out, etc.

For those who have adopted the practice of walking for their exercise, don't let the cool weather stop you from continuing to walk outside. You just need to adjust the way you dress.

### ***Experts recommend the following:***

#### **Use the Layering Principle**

**Base Layer:** Wicking fabric to keep your skin dry and prevent that clammy feeling.

**Insulating Layer:** Fleece or wool, vest or shirt that can be added or removed depending on how cold you feel.

**Windproof and Water-Resistant Outer Layer:** A jacket, preferably with a hood, to keep out the elements.

<http://walking.about.com/od/cold/ss/winterwalkgear.htm>



### ***Medication Safety Tip***

Ask your doctor to write down on the prescription the reason or medical condition for which the medication is being ordered.

**For example:** *not just “take twice a day” but “take twice a day for seizure control”.*

This is not only helpful to the person taking the medication and/or the person administering the medication but provides another layer of safety when the pharmacist completes the prescription.



### **Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care**

123 S. Broad Street ♦ Philadelphia, PA 19109 ♦ 215-546-0300 ♦ fax 215-790-4976

*PCHC is a core program of PMHCC, Inc.*

FUNDING PROVIDED BY PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY/ MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES, THE BUCKS, CHESTER, DELAWARE, AND MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICES OF MENTAL RETARDATION AND THE OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS, PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE.