

Public Policy Position

Pharmaceuticals in the Environment

1. Merck discovers, develops, manufactures and markets vaccines and medicines to address unmet medical needs. In our efforts we are committed to understanding and managing the environmental impacts of our products from discovery, through manufacturing, patient use and disposal. Environmental risk assessments are conducted on products in our pipeline long before they reach the marketplace. In addition, Merck continues to drive toward the application of “green chemistry” in producing new products. These principles allow us to reduce or eliminate the use of hazardous substances in our manufacturing by building in environmentally sound processes up front in process design.
2. Merck understands that the presence of trace amounts of pharmaceuticals in the environment (PIE) is a concern to regulators, policy makers, community groups and the public. We are working closely with government agencies, the scientific community and other stakeholder organizations to gain further understanding of this issue. As required, we submit environmental fate and effects data to appropriate drug review agencies during the drug registration process, and we develop and implement strategies to minimize any environmental impact from the production of our products.
3. Merck carefully monitors scientific research on the PIE issue, in particular studies that evaluate potential effects that pharmaceutical products may have on the aquatic environment and human health. We support the use of science-based environmental risk assessments to evaluate the PIE issue and we will continue to collaborate with regulatory, academic, health care and research organizations to identify additional data needs on the transport, fate and effects of pharmaceuticals in the environment.
4. Merck recognizes that some pharmaceuticals in water can also be traced to the improper disposal of unused medicines in sewer systems. We support the development of science-based programs aimed at enhancing appropriate use of medicines by increasing patient compliance to prescribed therapies, thereby decreasing the amount of unused pharmaceuticals. Merck also supports the development of science-based, cost-effective, and environmentally sound programs that promote the proper disposal of unused medicines in accordance with regional requirements.

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