

# Public Policy Statement: Responsible Disposal of Medicines in the Household

Merck understands that the presence of unwanted or expired medicines in households and trace amounts of pharmaceuticals in the environment are a concern to regulators, policy makers, community groups and the public.

Unwanted or expired medicines in the home may increase the chance of unintended poisonings and theft and misuse of medicines. Therefore, Merck supports legal, safe, secure and effective methods by which the public may dispose of medicines and which will protect individuals from accidental poisonings and deter theft and abuse. In addition, Merck supports disposal programs that minimize impact on the environment (see Merck's public policy statement on [Pharmaceuticals in the Environment](#)).

Merck works with government agencies, the scientific community and other stakeholder organizations to better understand disposal options that can facilitate timely, environmentally sound disposal at minimal cost to society. Merck believes that the public's interest will be best served by disposal options that have a proven ability to reduce drug abuse and misuse and that create positive effects on the environment.

Merck also supports other efforts to offer medicine disposal programs to residents of local communities. In evaluating these programs, which vary widely across the world, Merck believes that, at a minimum, they should:

1. Educate the public on appropriate and responsible storage and disposal of medicines.
2. Comply with all applicable laws and identify and exclude medicines that by law cannot be disposed of by the process employed by the program.
3. Minimize the potential risk of medicine diversion.
4. Be designed to scientifically evaluate economic and environmental impact as well as the potential effect on the incidence of medicine abuse/misuse.
5. Contain appropriate liability protections for those individuals involved in the implementation of the program, including healthcare providers and manufacturers.
6. Be financially supported by stakeholders in proportion to the respective impact on the quantity of medicine processed by the program and/or their benefit from participation in the program.

Merck understands that the debate over the type and funding of available medicine disposal programs will continue. Merck will actively participate in these discussions and work to ensure that the needs of patients to dispose of their unwanted medicines are appropriately met.

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