

Del Norte pharmacies offer drug take-back service

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Two pharmacies in Del Norte County now take back medicines for no charge. Both CVS and Walgreens drug stores now have bins next to their pharmacy counters where customers can deposit their prescription and over-the-counter medicines, ointments, lotions, vitamins, medicine patches and pet medications.

CVS is located at 657 U.S. Highway 101. Walgreens is located at 787 L St.

“This is big news that we now have not one but two locations where people can safely dispose of their medications and pharmaceuticals,” said Ted Ward, director of the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority, in a press release.

Medicines may be placed in these bins in their original packaging and those materials will be properly managed, following collection so personal information is kept secure. The double-lock bins cannot be opened without two separate keys from both the pharmacist and the collection company.

Customers who are especially concerned about protecting their personal information may also choose to empty their solid medications into a clear Ziploc bag. After removing or obscuring personal information,

empty plastic pill bottles with numbers 1, 2, 4 or 5 inside the chasing recycling arrows may be placed in recycling bins.

Ward advises that medicines should never be flushed down the drain or toilet, as those drugs are pollutants and neither wastewater treatment plants nor septic tank companies have the means to remove drugs dissolved into wastewater.

Both Walgreens and CVS programs also accept liquid medicines. CVS asks its customers to place those closed liquid containers into sealed Ziploc bags before placing them into the bins.

One slight difference in the programs is Walgreens accepts inhalers while CVS does not.

Neither medicine drop-off program accepts illegal drugs like heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine; chemicals like hydrogen peroxide; or mercury thermostats. Similarly, neither program accepts “sharps” like Epi-pens, needles, syringes, lancets or other sharp containers. Sharps in FDA-approved containers can be disposed of without charge at the following locations:

- Del Norte County Transfer Station, 1700 State St.
- Open Door Community Health Center, 550 East Washington Blvd.
- Del Norte Senior Center, 1765 Northcrest Dr.

“I am especially impressed by the commitment Walgreens and CVS have shown by creating and paying for these drug take-back programs,” Ward said. “In my opinion, that is really an excellent new customer service.”

In 2018, SB 212 was signed into law with the intent to reduce accidental poisonings, reduce abuse of prescription drugs and to improve water quality. Ward said when fully implemented, this law will establish comprehensive, producer-funded take-back programs for pharmaceutical and sharps wastes across California.

“One of the requirements of this law is that every community with a population of 50,000 or more will have access to an in-store drug take-back program. I am just thrilled that years ahead of this requirement, we already have two local pharmacies in Del Norte which are taking these new and important responsibilities seriously,” Ward said.

For questions, or to learn more about the program, call the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority at 465-1100.