

Spring cleaning: Medicine cabinets

U.S. Army Installation Management Command

Spring is in the air, and for many, it is time to start the annual ritual of spring cleaning.

This year, the U.S. Army and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency are asking you to add your medicine cabinets to your to-do list and help make your home and community safer by getting rid of unwanted or expired prescriptions.

Army installations across the United States will work with state and local law enforcement agencies on April 30 to provide locations for all Americans to anonymously turn in medications or prescriptions in support of the second annual National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day.

“The Army is proud to lead the way in demonstrating the Department of Defense's commitment to a drug-free community,” said Linda Martinez, an Army Substance Abuse Program representative at U.S. Army Installation Management Command headquarters.

“We support this National Take-Back Initiative to help make our installation communities a safer place to live and work,” Martinez said. “I strongly encourage Soldiers, Families and Civilians to take advantage of this key event and anonymously turn in their unused and expired medications. This is a prime opportunity to raise community awareness and educate our communities on the dangers of prescription drug abuse.”

The DEA conducted the first take-back day in September 2010, and Americans turned in more than 242,000 pounds—121 tons—of prescription drugs at nearly 4,100 sites across the nation.

Medicines that languish in home cabinets are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse and abuse, according to DEA. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the U.S. are high -- more Americans currently abuse prescription drugs than the number of those using cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin combined, according to the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet.

“The overwhelming public response to DEA's first nationwide take-back event last fall not only rid homes of potentially harmful prescription drugs, but was an unprecedented opportunity to educate everyone about the growing prescription drug abuse problem,” said DEA Administrator Michele Leonhart. “Studies have shown that, for many, prescription drugs are the very first drugs they abuse—and all too often they aren’t the last. That is why we are committed to helping Americans keep their homes safe by ridding their medicine cabinets of expired, unused, and unwanted drugs.”

For more information about the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day or to find a drop-off location, visit the DEA Web site at

http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html or contact your local Army Substance Abuse Program representative.

For materials to support your local take-back event, visit <http://www.nationaltakebackday.com/>