



A dose of safety: How to properly dispose of unused medications

Grand Forks Herald 10-12-2015

By [Wade Rupard](#)

Carma Hanson wants it to be as easy as possible to dispose of unneeded or unused medications.

As the coordinator for Safe Kids Grand Forks, a regional coalition whose mission is to prevent unintentional injuries and death to children and youth, Hanson and her organization are hosting a prescription drop-off Thursday at the Grand Forks Senior Center.

In conjunction with the Grand Forks Sheriff's Office, residents will have the chance to drop off any outdated or unused over-the-counter or prescription medications for disposal from 11 a.m. to noon.

Getting rid of these medications is hugely important, Hanson said. Over-the-counter and prescription medications are now the No. 1 cause of poisoning for children, she said. But making the home in general a safer environment benefits everyone, she said.

"I think we all have things sitting in our medicine cabinets that aren't being used," she said. "Events like this one raise people's awareness about the dangers of not getting rid of those."

A permanent drop-off location is inside the Grand Forks Police Department. That drop box is open 24 hours a day. Hanson said drugs dropped off there will be incinerated, and people do not need to remove labels or take the medication out of the bottle.

Hanson said if people aren't able to make it to a drop-off location, they should mix the medication into items such as sawdust, cat litter or coffee grounds in order to dissolve them for proper disposal. Just simply throwing the medicine away or dumping them down the toilet can get into the landfill or water system and be harmful.

"We really want to encourage people to dispose medications the proper way," she said. "There isn't much good that can come from keeping them for those 'what if' scenarios."

Thursday's event is the second one this year. Safe Kids Grand Forks hosts the event at the Senior Center twice a year to give those who might not be able to drive an easy place to dispose of their unnecessary medicines.

Safe Kids Grand Forks also started drive-by drop-offs this year, where people can drive up to a specific location and get their medication incinerated. At the latest drop-off, Hanson said more than 175 people showed up, and they collected more than 1,000 pounds of drugs.

"I think we're doing a good job of raising awareness, but there's always more that can be done," Hanson said.

