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Got unused medications? Don't flush or toss; take 'em back to the pharmacy

By [Mary Ann Roser](#) | Wednesday, April 21, 2010, 01:55 PM

The newly opened [Live Oak Pharmacy](#) is marking the 40th anniversary of [Earth Day](#) Thursday by launching a program to dispose of old pharmaceuticals in a way that won't pollute water supplies.

The pharmacy at 1611 W. Fifth St. is among several in the Austin area that will take back unused or expired medications and send them off for incineration. The gases from incineration are captured and filtered "so they don't go into our air," said Scot Maitland, co-owner and spokesman for the pharmacy.

In addition, the pharmacy is honoring Earth Day by donating 5 percent of retail to local and environmental causes as part of an [Austin celebration to raise money for those causes](#), said Maitland, 38.

The "Dispose My Meds" program is spearheaded by the National Community Pharmacists Association and Sharps Compliance Inc. They said that 200 million pounds of unused pharmaceuticals are generated each year, contributing to an 80 percent increase in U.S. deaths from accidental narcotics overdoses over a recent six-year period. Pharmaceuticals also have been found in the drinking water of more than 50 million Americans, the two groups said in a news release today.

Live Oak said the drug return program is free, except for boxes of used syringes. For those, the fee is \$5 per container, Maitland said.

People must bring the return drugs in the original packaging, and people will be asked to fill out a form, he said.

Several other pharmacies in the area that provide the service can be found on [DisposeMyMeds.org](#) website, which offers a "locator" link. They include:

- ▶ Lamar Plaza Drug Store, 1132 S Lamar Blvd.
- ▶ Quick Mesa Park Pharmacy, 701 Palm Valley Blvd., Round Rock
- ▶ Dripping Springs Pharmacy, 100 Commons Rd., Suite 1, Dripping Springs

Nearly 800 pharmacies in 40 states are taking part in the program, according to the pharmacists association and Sharps Compliance Inc. Consumers also can get a postage-paid envelope to fill out at home and send in to Sharps Compliance.

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By Lacey
April 21, 2010 4:25 PM | [Link to this](#)

FYI
By Mark
April 21, 2010 6:36 PM | [Link to this](#)

"People must bring the return drugs in the original packaging, and people will be

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asked to fill out a form, he said."

This is enough to keep me away. It's nobody's business what drugs I'm taking.

By Lela Cargill
 April 21, 2010 9:55 PM | [Link to this](#)

But what to do with the empty containers that drugs came in? When you're finished, you can't throw them in the trash because they have private health info on them.

By Toby VILLA
 April 21, 2010 10:42 PM | [Link to this](#)

Lela, maybe you should peel the label off and burn it? Perhaps shred it? Throw it in the trash anyway since the chances of someone else grabbing it are slim and they can't do hardly anything with it anyway? You really are a clueless little broad.

By MedWhacker
 April 22, 2010 4:00 AM | [Link to this](#)

Ever hear of drugs, pot, etc. turn up missing from the property room at police departments, etc.? They need the original container so the enterprising pharmacy tech. knows if there is anything coming in that is worth anything on the street. Personally, I trust my disposal system 100%. Can anyone say Aponte? And for Lela - forget about Toby, HE is clueless. The labels don't peel off, you have to scrape your name off.

By mestizO
 April 22, 2010 6:51 AM | [Link to this](#)

stupid idea. a good pharmacist is hard to find. more & more are becoming fundies—they would resale or take them themselves as they quote the bible.

By Lela Cargill
 April 22, 2010 7:41 AM | [Link to this](#)

MedWhacker, thank you for the explanation of Toby's comment. I thought he was rather rude. These containers take up a lot of room in the trash and the environment. I've been burning them, but most people don't have that option and many people are old and yes, subject to identity theft from people going through their trash. I will look into Aponte, thank you!

By borderbonfire
 April 22, 2010 8:19 AM | [Link to this](#)

I think all of you are being a bit paranoid. Even if the Pharm Tech does want to take your meds what difference is it to you? its not like your directly contributing to the delinquency of a Pharmacy Tech. Second I doubt what little info you'll be required to give will give away who you are and what your taking. Besides get over yourselves who cares what your taking.

By CF1
 April 22, 2010 8:27 AM | [Link to this](#)

MedWhacker - don't know what pharmacy you are using but the labels peel off our meds easily. We shred the label then recycle the container. If the label doesn't come off then we use permanent marker to redact any personal information before recycling.

As to disposing of unused meds, before taking them to a pharmacy to be incinerated check with the vets who work with low income individuals. Many pets take the same meds as we do and some will redistribute the meds for veterinary use.

By Reasonable
 April 22, 2010 11:48 AM | [Link to this](#)

I wonder what percentage of the meds will be relabeled and find their way to 3rd world countries for sale by unscrupulous suppliers. I'd rather destroy them myself, so I know outdated meds are not sold at huge profits to unsuspecting people abroad.

By Ashley
 April 22, 2010 1:06 PM | [Link to this](#)

for those of you who are unaware of a little thing called HIPPA...companies who work for pharmacies must also go through HIPPA training, therefore anything they see on a label or elsewhere, prohibits them from even talking about it, let alone wanting to take off old prescription labels. has anyone ever thought of the fact that the unused drugs your turning in is also something they probably dont want to take. High Cholesterol for you? maybe..for me, not so much, so there is no way I would want to take them. As far as narcotics are concerned, I am sure the vast majority of them are consumed. Besides, if you really have something to hide, maybe you should have been more careful

By Auntie Skeptic
 April 22, 2010 3:27 PM | [Link to this](#)

"I wonder what percentage of the meds will be relabeled and find their way to 3rd world countries for sale by unscrupulous supplier." BINGO! I'll be waiting for this story to come out. Couple of years, max.

By Donna Howe
 April 22, 2010 7:09 PM | [Link to this](#)

Did you read the article? The medicine is incinerated. They do not go into a system where they could end up in a 3rd world county. They do not go into the water system where the large amount of unregulated, unknown chemicals might end up in our bodies due no one knowing how much is there.

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