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❖ RETURN OF UNWANTED MEDICINES PROJECT (RUM BINS)

What is the Return of Unwanted Medicines Project?

Essentially it is a Commonwealth Government funded program that allows for medicines that have expired or aren't used any longer to be destroyed in a way that does not harm our environment.

We all have expired medicines, medicines that we haven't used in a long time and maybe never have to use again! But once they're in our house there is a risk that small children can get to them and get seriously ill. Also, if you decide to take a medicine that has been sitting in a cupboard for who knows how long...there is no guarantee that it won't do more harm than good!

You should never dispose of your medicines in a normal bin in case someone else gets a hold of them and can poison them (especially children!). Please don't throw them down the toilet or drain because it can harm our marine life and affect our environment.

So, this project allows for the general public to give ALL of their unwanted medications at no charge to their local pharmacy who will then dispose of it in the RUM bins. They will black-out your name from the label if it is still legible to maintain your privacy. When the bin is full, it is collected and then gets destroyed by incineration which is EPA approved.

What can go in there?

Basically any medicines you don't need anymore! But you can't put any needles or sharps in the bin, because of you will injure someone!

I thought the medicines go to help poorer countries?

I have been asked this question many times! The WHO no longer advises that our unwanted medicines get sent for overseas aid for many reasons;

- If we wouldn't use them or re-supply them to our patients then why should they be safe for another country
- There is a risk of confusion because of language differences and different brand names; so may do more harm than good
- Issue of there being a black market in some countries, so the medicines may be intercepted and sold as something else because there's no 'policing' what happens overseas

So basically, the Australian Pharmacy Board does not allow for their re-use/recycling. This project/initiative is to allow our environment to be safe as well as reduce the chances of 'misadventure' in your household.

What can I do a child in my house does take some/all of medicines from the cupboard?

Firstly, don't panic! Ring the **Poisons Information Centre** on 13 11 26.

Try to give them as much information as you can so they can tell you the best treatment;

- x What they took
- x How much they took
- x How long ago
- x What symptoms they are having; are they breathing, conscious, vomiting etc.
- x When did they eat
- x How old the child is and how much they weigh

It is best to store medicines completely out-of-reach from children, preferably high in a cupboard with a lock that they cannot reach. Do not keep medicines in the bathroom where they can be left unattended, or your bedside tables, the kitchen or wherever else is easy for them to find.

Use the RUM service to get rid of everything you don't need as soon as possible to prevent this from happening.