

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Drinking water, pharmaceuticals and personal care products**

Recent media reports have raised public awareness that the medicine we take and the personal care products we use can enter our waterways and drinking water supplies.

New technology allows scientists to detect trace amounts of these compounds in our water. Until recently, researchers studying those chemicals focused on the potential effects on the environment. Research is underway on this emerging topic to determine if pharmaceuticals and personal care products, or PPCPs, have potential human health effects at trace levels.

PPCPs include thousands of commonly used products such as prescription and over-the-counter drugs, veterinary drugs, fragrances, lotions and cosmetics.

People contribute PPCPs to the environment when medication passes from the body and into sewer lines, external products wash down the bath drain, or when unused medication is improperly discarded.

Analysis may now detect PPCPs and other particles in water in concentrations of parts per trillion, the equivalent of a drop in 33 connected Olympic-sized swimming pools. The Environmental Protection Agency reports the absence of any evidence of adverse human health effects from PPCPs at the levels found in recent testing of public waterworks. There are no EPA-approved tests for PPCPs, which are not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Clean water is a precious commodity no one should take for granted. Water is essential for good health. Our water is safer now than it was 30 years ago and it was safer 30 years ago than it was a century ago.

The Virginia Department of Health works closely with the EPA to ensure the safety of the Commonwealth's citizens and their drinking water. The VDH also works to ensure that public waterworks around Virginia are informed about emerging issues and that they comply with any new rules and regulations.

The department encourages citizens to help protect the environment and our drinking water by disposing of medications properly.

(more)

**What can consumers do?**

- Keep drinking water. It is essential to your health. Your local water supply is always your best bet for safe water.
- Talk to your doctor about all medications, vitamins and supplements you take and take only those that are necessary. Do not stop taking prescribed medications without talking first to your doctor.
- If you have a private water-well, private labs may provide testing of your water.
- Dispose of unused, unnecessary or expired medications by mixing loose pills with garbage such as coffee grounds or kitty litter in a sealable bag. Place that bag in another sealable bag before placing it in the trash. Dispose of pill containers separately after removing or masking personal information from the label.
- Certain medications with substantial potential for abuse as well as certain antibiotics and antivirals should be disposed of in the toilet, according to the Food and Drug Administration. For more information, talk to your pharmacist or go to [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/factsht/proper\\_disposal.html](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/factsht/proper_disposal.html) for more from the Office of National Drug Control Policy.
- Some localities have take-back programs or household hazardous waste collection programs. Contact your local waste management authority or your pharmacy for more information.
- If you have additional concerns, talk to your primary care physician.

**To learn more**

- From the EPA  
[www.epa.gov/ppcp/faq.html](http://www.epa.gov/ppcp/faq.html) and [www.epa.gov/ppcp/basic2.html](http://www.epa.gov/ppcp/basic2.html)
- From the Virginia Department of Health [www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/Alerts/DrinkingWater.htm](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/Alerts/DrinkingWater.htm)
- On the Safe Water Drinking Act  
[www.epa.gov/safewater/sdwa/basicinformation.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/sdwa/basicinformation.html)
- From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/healthywater](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/healthywater)
- From the American Water Works Association  
[www.drinktap.org](http://www.drinktap.org)

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