



Public Health
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Panhandle Health District

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Healthy People in Healthy Communities

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NEWS RELEASE

Health District Hosts National Prescription Drug Take Back Day Event Panhandle Health District – April 17, 2023

Empty out your medicine cabinet this Saturday, April 22nd, during National Prescription Drug Take Back Day! Panhandle Health District (PHD), in collaboration with Blue Cross of Idaho, is hosting a free and easy drop off from 10am-2pm at the Coeur d’Alene location of Blue Cross of Idaho, 1812 N. Lakewood Dr.

“This is an important community event where anyone can safely dispose of their unused medication,” said Makenna Hunziker, Health Education Specialist at PHD and event coordinator. “We want to make it easy and convenient for our community to dispose of unwanted and expired medication that may be hanging out in their medicine cabinet.”

Drug Take Back Day is a simple and safe way to dispose of unused and expired medications. At the PHD Take Back event, PHD staff will accept all unused and expired medication, not just opioids, in pill and liquid forms. The North Idaho Alliance of Care will also be participating in the event and will accept sharps that need disposed of and have their mobile HIV testing unit on site. All services are free and anonymous, no questions asked.

According to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, in 2021 the North Idaho region has two of the highest prescribing rates in the state.

“Check your medicine cabinet. Are there any prescription pain medicines?,” said Hunziker. “If you’re no longer dealing with the issue for which these pills were originally prescribed, dispose of them as soon as possible so they don’t fall into the wrong hands.”

This initiative addresses a vital public safety and public health issue. According to the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, **among people 12 and older, 3.3 percent (or 9.2 million people) misused opioids in the past year. Specifically, 8.7 million people aged 12 or older misused prescription pain relievers in the past year compared with 1.1 million people who used heroin.** The survey also showed that 44.9 percent of misused prescription drugs were obtained from a friend or relative (i.e. being given them, buying them, or taking them without asking). In addition, Americans are now advised that certain methods for disposing

of unused medicine – flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash – both pose potential safety and health hazards.

Each year there are two Take Back Days, one in the spring and one in the fall. According to the Idaho Office of Drug Policy (ODP), the October 2022 Take Back Day resulted in the disposal of 2.3 tons (or 3,777 lbs.) of medication in Idaho. If you miss the event, there are several locations across the region that offer medication disposal services. To find a location near you, check the ODP website: <https://odp.idaho.gov/prescription-drug-take-back-program/>

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Panhandle Health District provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.