

SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM

SAFE MEDICATION DISPOSAL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

To Order: www.iknowmine.org/safemedicine

HOW CAN I GET SAFE MEDICINE DISPOSAL PRODUCTS?

The Substance Misuse Prevention Program at ANTHC provides FREE safe medicine disposal products to individuals, tribal health organizations, and other entities around Alaska. To order products for yourself or your organization, visit www.iknowmine.org/safemedicine.

WHAT IS DETERRA®?

Deterra® is an independent brand that manufactures and sells safe medicine disposal products. While ANTHC currently only provides Deterra® products, neither ANTHC nor the Substance Misuse Prevention program specifically endorse Deterra® over their competitors. ANTHC does not receive any partnership discounts with Deterra®; rather we purchase products at market price with grant funding in order to distribute these products free to tribal health partners in Alaska.

HOW DOES DETERRA' S® DEACTIVATION PROCESS WORK?

Deterra® permanently deactivates medications making them inaccessible for misuse or accidental poisoning. Each Deterra® bag contains a pod[s] of activated carbon (buckets contain loose powdered carbon). The when mixed with water, the carbon becomes activated and begins absorbing the chemicals in medications. In addition to beginning the deactivation process, warm water also dissolves the medication (pills, patches, liquids, creams, and films) allowing them to be absorbed and deactivated by the carbon.

WHAT DRUGS WILL DETERRA® DEACTIVATE?

Deterra® will deactivate any organic medications including opioids. However, it will not absorb any metals, such as iron or lithium, which are contained in certain medications. If your medication has specific disposal instructions (or your doctor or pharmacist has instructed you how to dispose of the medication), please follow those instructions.

WHY SHOULDN'T I JUST FLUSH OR THROW AWAY UNUSED MEDICATIONS?

Most water that is flushed down a toilet or washed down a sink actually ends up at water treatment plants where it is filtered, cleaned, and recycled for other water purposes. When you flush unused or expired medication, those medications are dissolved and absorbed into your water system. Water treatment facilities struggle to filter out all pharmaceutical drugs from the water, as of 2014 there were over 1,500 published reports of the occurrence of pharmaceuticals in sewage, surface waters, ground waters, and elsewhere. Because of this increase in these findings, we recommend that pharmaceuticals NOT be disposed in the toilet or sink but instead be disposed using safe medicine disposal practices such as Deterra® bags or medication take back events.

CAN I MIX MY MEDICATIONS WITH CAT LITTER, COFFEE GROUNDS, OR SAWDUST BEFORE THROWING THEM AWAY?

Cat litter, coffee grounds, and sawdust create a barrier and make the medication undesirable to consume but they do not deactivate the drugs. Once in the landfill, these medications can still leach out into the ground and into the water. Theoretically, if somebody comes across medication that was disposed of in this way, they could still use and misuse the drugs.

HOW QUICKLY DOES THE DEACTIVATION PROCESS WORK?

With Deterra®, the process of deactivation starts as soon as water is mixed with the carbon, however it can take some time to complete. Highly soluble medications (like liquids, or liquid gel capsules) will dissolve and react rapidly, while other less soluble drugs types (solid pills) will take longer to dissolve and react. The deactivation period varies based on the number and type of medication being deactivated. It is important to keep the medication out of reach, especially of children and pets, while the product is being deactivated. It is okay to throw away the Deterra® pack as soon as you have mixed the medication, water, and carbon. Mixing warm water with Deterra® can help speed up the deactivation process by dissolving medications faster.

WHAT SIZES OF DEACTIVATION PRODUCTS ARE AVAILABLE?

ANTHC provides multiple sizes of deactivation products depending on personal or organizational needs—we currently have Pouches: small, medium, x-large. Buckets: 3.5 gallon, 5 gallon.

HOW DO I DISPOSE OF THE POUCHES OR BUCKETS AFTER DEACTIVATION?

Deterra® pouches are made of biodegradable materials that will disintegrate when introduced to landfill microbes. Buckets can also be disposed of in a landfill, but are not biodegradable. However, if your landfill allows liquid dumping, the bucket contents can be disposed of and the bucket can be repurposed.

HOW LONG CAN A BUCKET SERVE AS A TAKE BACK DEVICE?

Once water has been added to the bucket, we recommend replacing the bucket every 3-4 months as a slight odor from bacteria buildup may be present. If you would like to continue using the same bucket but the mixture has dried up, adding more water will begin the deactivation process again.

WHAT IS THE CAPACITY OF MEDICATION THAT CAN BE PUT INTO EACH POUCH/BUCKET? WHAT IF I ACCIDENTLY ADD MORE MEDICATION THAN THE AMOUNT RECOMMENDED?

The recommended capacity is listed on the back of each product, in addition, each product sent out by ANTHC also comes with a tracking sheet to count the number of medication placed into the pouch/bucket. Adding medication to the pouch/bucket in amounts at the recommended capacity (or below) will result in optimal deactivation efficiency. If you were to add more than the capacity recommended, deactivation of additional drugs will still occur but at a reduced efficiency. ANTHC provides free safe medication disposal products—if ever in doubt please order more products in order to fulfill your medication disposal needs.

- Small pouches—15 pills | 2oz liquid | 2 patches
- Medium pouches—45 pills | 6oz liquid | 6 patches
- Xlarge pouches—450 pills | 60oz liquid | 60 patches
- 3.5 gallon bucket—1400 pills | 6 liters liquid | 185 patches
- 5 gallon bucket—2000 pills | 9.5 liters liquid | 265 patches

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I DIDN'T ADD WATER?

Each pouch consists of a pod of activated carbon, if water is not added, then the water-soluble pod will not open and expose the carbon to the medication (this water-soluble pod coating works identically to laundry or dishwasher pods). Warm water will also help to dissolve pills and draw the drugs out of patches. The absence of water will not allow the deactivation process to begin—therefore no water = no deactivation. Instruction for use are located on the back of each safe medicine disposal product.

ARE THE DETERRA® ACTIVE INGREDIENTS SAFE?

The activated carbon used in Deterra® is non-corrosive to the skin or the eyes. The carbon is considered non-flammable and is stable under normal conditions during shipment, storage, and use. There are no known harmful effects associated with ingestion of the carbon. It is considered non-toxic.

HAVE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ENDORSED DETERRA®?

Government agencies cannot and do not endorse specific products. However, the Federal Government supported the development of drug deactivation bags to allow safe disposal of old prescription opioids.

HOW CAN I COMPLY WITH LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS?

At-home drug disposal is generally unregulated by federal, state, or local authorities. Customers using Deterra® institutionally (clinics, pharmacies, etc.) Should follow federal, state, and local regulations. We have found state and local authorities to be very helpful in providing assistance, and they can conveniently be contacted for questions.

CAN I USE DETERRA® FOR THIS PURPOSE IN COMPLIANCE WITH MY FACILITIES CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE POLICIES?

While testing on Deterra® products has shown that it renders medications “non-retrievable” and therefore unavailable, unusable, and no longer available for diversion for all practical purposes. However, it is up to the facility/institution/organization to ensure that they comply with all local, state, and federal regulations. If your facility/institution/organization has policies around disposing of a controlled substance, please follow those policies.

DO I NEED TO HAVE THE FULL QUANTITY OF MEDICATION LISTED ON THE POUCH/BUCKET OR CAN I USE THE PRODUCT WITH LESS THAN THAT AMOUNT?

You do not have to have the full quantity of medication listed on the pouch/bucket before you can begin the deactivation process—any amount of medication under the listed amount will be able to be deactivated. For pouches, we recommended deactivating the medication you currently have, disposing of the pouch, and then order more for future disposal. For buckets, you can either continue to add water to the bucket when you add more medication, or you can dispose of the bucket and order a new one for future medication disposal.