



*For more  
Information*



"Improving the quality of life in rural communities"



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▶ The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers basic information and answers to some frequently asked questions on their Web site at [www.epa.gov/ppcp](http://www.epa.gov/ppcp).

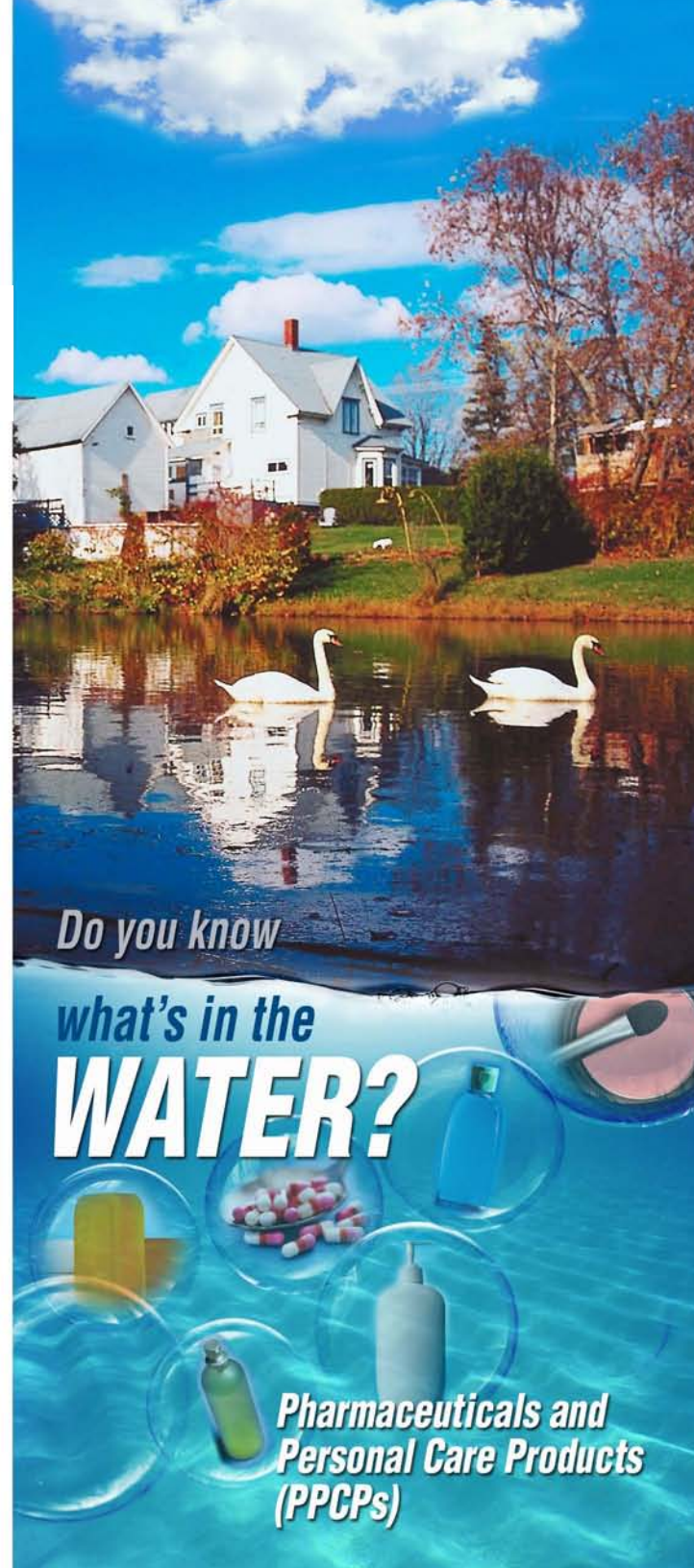
▶ An extensive article about drugs in drinking water, researched by the Associated Press, can be found at [www.cnn.com/2008/HEALTH/03/10/pharma.water1/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2008/HEALTH/03/10/pharma.water1/index.html).

▶ The Safe Drinking Water Trust *eBulletin*, produced by the Rural Community Assistance Partnership, featured an article about PPCPs in their 4/23/08 issue. It can be found at [www.watertrust.org/feature\\_article.asp?nID=103](http://www.watertrust.org/feature_article.asp?nID=103)

▶ The National Environmental Services Center's Winter 2007 *Pipeline* newsletter *Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Products: An Overview* is available online at [www.nesc.wvu.edu](http://www.nesc.wvu.edu) or by calling 800-624-8301 for a free copy.

*Rural Community Assistance Partnership*

▶ [www.rcap.org](http://www.rcap.org) ▶ 888-321-7227



*Do you know*

*what's in the  
WATER?*

*Pharmaceuticals and  
Personal Care Products  
(PPCPs)*

# Do you know what's in the **WATER?**

## Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products (PPCPs)

Scientific evidence shows that a growing number of drugs and chemicals found in personal care products are ending up in waterways across the country. The potential for harm to human health is not known at this time, but because drinking water is drawn from these same sources, there is a growing concern about how these drugs and other substances may be affecting people, especially with long-term exposure. To protect our drinking water and our health, it makes sense that we reduce the amount of these PPCPs in our wastewater as much as possible.

Federal guidelines<sup>1</sup> recommend three ways to dispose of prescription drugs:

1. Take unused drugs and medicines to a "community pharmaceutical take-back program" that allows the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal.
2. Do not flush unused portions of drugs and medicines down the toilet, except where the label or instructions indicate to flush.
3. Throw them in the trash, *but only after* taking them out of their original bottle, making them unpalatable by mixing them with wet coffee grounds, glue or kitty litter, and putting them in a leak-proof container.

Lotion, soaps, sunscreen, shampoo and perfume all wash off easily when we shower, bathe or go swimming. These chemicals end up in our waterways also, and little is known about the effect they may have. We can make conscientious choices to buy products that contain only biodegradable or natural ingredients. People are also urged to avoid purchasing consumer products that are labeled "antibacterial" to lessen the likelihood of resistant microorganisms increasing in the environment.

1. Office of National Drug Control Policy: [www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov](http://www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov)

## Facts About **PPCPs**

- ▶ PPCPs are pharmaceuticals and personal care products such as drugs, lotions, soaps, cosmetics and perfumes. PPCPs can be washed off, flushed, or poured down the drain and into our waterways.
- ▶ PPCPs also include veterinary medications, such as hormones and antibiotics used to treat livestock. These compounds are excreted by animals and can leach into groundwater and nearby rivers, lakes, ponds or streams and contaminate water supplies for surrounding farms and communities.
- ▶ When people take medications, some of the compounds are absorbed, but many are not. They pass through the body and are flushed down the toilet.
- ▶ \$200.7 billion was spent in the U.S. for prescriptions in 2005, almost five times the amount spent in 1990. Currently, nearly 65% of Americans take prescription drugs.



- ▶ It is estimated that every day people use between 9 and 15 personal care products and apply an average of 126 different ingredients to their skin.
- ▶ Wastewater treatment plants are not specifically designed to remove PPCPs from the water that they treat and discharge into our waterways.
- ▶ Researchers have found male fish with female sex characteristics and some fish with both male and female reproductive organs in some contaminated waterways, and are investigating whether this is caused by PPCPs.
- ▶ There is currently no federal requirement for testing drinking water supplies for PPCPs.
- ▶ Most bottled water distributors do not necessarily test or treat their water for PPCPs.

