Disposing Pharmaceuticals

By Joe Tilton

A convenient county-wide system is in place to accept outdated pharmaceuticals and unused drugs for area residents.

Leslie Kinnee at the Stanton office of the Mid-Michigan Health Department said there are five locations in the county, including one in the Village Office, downtown Lakeview at 315 South Lincoln. Another in the immediate area is Howard City. Other locations are the Police Department in Carson City and Greenville’s Department of Public Safety.

On a regular basis, sheriff’s deputies gather the substances and incinerates them at a special facility in Grand Rapids rather than risk them seeping into water-supplies in the county.

“This program has been available since 2012 in Montcalm County,” Leslie said, “and we collect from 300 to 400-pounds of items deposited every 90-days county-wide.”

If syringes or needles need to be discarded, take them to the Health Department in Stanton and not to the disposal boxes. The “sharps” program is separate.

In previous years, it was common for physicians to advise flushing these items down the toilet; however, water testing in some locales shows that these substances have not evaporated, even making it through sophisticated filters, giving rise to their showing up in tap water.

Unused drugs often remain in homes where the person they are prescribed for do not complete their doctor’s instructions, or when a loved one passes, leaving fresh pharmaceuticals that are at full potency.

Associated Press writers Jeff Donn, Martha Mendoza and Justin Pritchard, wrote recently that discoveries of antibiotics, anti-convulsants, mood stabilizers and sex hormones have been found in drinking-water supplies that serve 41-million citizens. While the concentrations are tiny, and far below levels of a medical dose, utility departments insist their water is safe.

Adding to the concern is a five-month inquiry that revealed drugs have been detected in drinking water of 24 major metropolitan areas from California to New Jersey, including Detroit and Louisville, KY.

Reports from government sources indicate discovery of 85 man-made drugs detected in water supplies, including birth-control hormones in amounts that, some believe, impair human cell functions. Other researchers don’t believe the levels are of much concern.

Another potential problem is children or others without the ability to determine correct use of a prescribed drug having access to them. Leaving a bottle of pills unsecured is an invitation to a drug crisis.

When you bring unused pharmaceuticals or any substance considered a drug to the box at the Lakeview Village Office, they are secure and not available for use by anyone and will not be a risk to water supplies.

The Lakeview collection box is available for public use 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday - Friday.

Leslie Kinnee gave a special “thank you” to the Medication Disposal Coalition of Montcalm County for holding “medicine take-back days” and for continued support of the program.