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# yale health care

NEWS FROM THE YALE HEALTH PLAN

VOL. X NO. 5

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER 2007

Whatever our ages, ethnicities, religions, political leanings or income and education levels, we all have to breathe the air, drink the water, and eat the food produced from the earth. Stories related to the environment are in the news almost daily and, as we are becoming increasingly aware, the environment is not something “out there”; keeping our homes, our communities and our planet healthy is an integral part of taking care of ourselves and our families, now and for future generations. Yale’s profound and public commitment to energy conservation, greenhouse gas reduction, recycling, and “building green” reflects this awareness. As you will read in this issue, the new YUHS building—where comfort, beauty and consideration for the environment will integrate with patient-focused, state-of-the-art medicine—will itself provide a tangible expression of our caring for our community.

—Rhea Hirshman, editor

## Our new home is green

In the past several months, we’ve published updates on the progress of the new YUHS facility, scheduled to open in early 2010. A significant feature of our new home will be its sustainable design, a reflection of

Yale’s commitment to “becoming a model university...taking a leadership role...to respond to the energy challenge (resulting in) a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 10%

below our 1990 levels by the year 2020” (President Richard Levin speaking in October, 2005).



The new building is being designed in accordance with the Leadership In Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating system, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). Additionally, we are using the Green Guide for Health Care—a best practices guide for healthy and sustainable building design, construction, and operations for health care facilities—as good practice for our future home and, wherever possible, for our current home as well.

For example, we will be:

- Maximizing natural lighting and ventilation.

## What does “green” mean?

**Definitions of some commonly-used terms related to environmental health.**

### Biodegradable

Plant or animal material that can be broken down biologically and re-integrated into the environment. Common products, such as grocery bags, disposable utensils and cups and packaging can be made from biodegradable materials [e.g. cornstarch, sugar cane, palm fiber] instead of petroleum, and composted instead of remaining in landfills.

### Carbon footprint

A measurement of how actions (including energy use, farming and manufacturing methods and recycling efforts) taken by individuals, communities, businesses and governments affect the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere and, consequently, the health of the environment.

More information: [http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind\\_calculator.html](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html).

### Green cleaning products

The ingredients in many conventional cleaning products (especially those labeled flammable, corrosive, toxic or reactive) are considered hazardous to health and/or the environment. Many less hazardous alternatives—made from products including citrus or coconut oils—are available at natural food outlets and, increasingly, in mainstream stores.

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continued on page 2

## OUR NEW HOME IS GREEN

*continued from page 1*

- Maximizing energy efficiency and reducing use of mechanical systems. For instance: using chilled beams—construction that allows for the natural rise and fall of air, which will be cooled and warmed as needed, significantly reducing energy use.
- Conserving water (e.g. collecting and using roof runoff to water the lawn).
- Using locally manufactured products and materials wherever possible.
- Maximizing the positive experience of nature in the work place by using natural materials such as wood; fostering direct, indirect, and symbolic experiences with nature; employing designs derived from organic patterns and forms and implementing exterior views of nature.
- Enhancing recycling capacity.

- Purchasing products that decrease our carbon footprint by doing business with suppliers that are green.
- Installing a healing garden on the 4th floor of our new building; patients and staff can enjoy natural plantings and time outdoors in a safe, private environment
- Installing flooring that is environmentally friendly and bacteriostatic, decreasing the need for harsh cleaning products while enhancing infection control.
- Creating a structure that is flexible and has the capacity to accommodate future building upgrades.

For more on the University's sustainability initiatives: <http://www.yale.edu/sustainability/>

For more about building green: <http://www.usgbc.org/> and <http://www.ctgbc.org/>

*Information for this article supplied by Christa Mrowka, Manager, Administrative Services, YUHS Director's Office*



## WHAT DOES "GREEN" MEAN?

*continued from page 1*

You can also clean effectively using common products such as: alcohol, baking soda, borax, cornstarch, lemon juice, liquid soap, salt, and white vinegar.

For green cleaning recipes: <http://es.epa.gov/techninfo/facts/safe-fs.html>

### Pest control—natural

A major way of reducing pollution in local waterways and Long Island Sound is by not treating lawns and gardens with harsh chemical fertilizers or weed killers and by using organic materials or beneficial bugs or bacteria instead.

Runoff of chemicals used to create "perfect" lawns poses significant health risks to adults, children and pets. Lawn pesticides are poisons designed to kill living organisms; their presence in the environment is linked to higher rates of cancer, birth defects, nerve damage and learning disabilities.

For more information about natural gardening and pest control:

<http://richsoil.com/lawn/index.jsp>

<http://www.organicgardening.com/feature/1,7518,s1-2-7-8,00.html> <http://www.hort.uconn.edu/ipm>

### Renewable resource

A type of resource that can be replaced—unlike petroleum products, coal and natural gas. Renewable energy resources include the sun, wind and water power, and gases captured from landfills.

### Recycling

What becomes of the items you put in the recycle bin? Plastic containers are formed into lumber, outdoor furniture and carpeting, and some manufacturers have incorporated plastics into their clothing lines. Glass bottles are recycled into vases, drinking glasses and glass tiles used in counters and flooring. Paper is used for cellulose building insulation.

# in touch

## IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

<b>Urgent Care</b>	203-432-0123	
<i>Open 24 hrs/day, seven days per week</i>		
<b>Toll free out of area</b>	1-877-YHP-CARE	
<b>General information</b>	203-432-0246	
<b>Pharmacy</b>	203-432-0033	
Monday, Tuesday,		
Wednesday, Friday		8:00 AM–6:30 PM
Thursday		8:30 AM–6:30 PM
Saturday		8:30 AM–3:30 PM
<b>Patient Representative</b>	203-432-0109	
<b>Medicare/Retiree Coordinator</b>	203-432-8134	
<b>Outpatient referrals</b>	203-432-7397	
<b>Claims</b>	203-432-0250	
<b>Inpatient Care Facility</b>	203-432-0001	

Even tires are chipped and used as a longer-lasting alternative to wood mulch in landscaping and playgrounds.

### Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)

VOCs are gases emitted from products including cleaning solutions, dry cleaning, paints, carpets, furniture, photocopiers, electronic devices and adhesives. They often have an odor (think of the distinctive odor of newly-laid carpeting), contribute to air pollution and can pose health risks. VOCs can be reduced through using no or low VOC paint, purchasing wool, bamboo or grass rugs instead of those with latex backing, and using environmentally friendly cleaning solutions.

### Sustainable ("green") design/building

Sustainable design means designing buildings to minimize their environmental impact over their lifetimes. A few examples: using renewable resources and locally-produced supplies wherever possible; landscaping with native plantings; using solar panels for heat and hot water and shade trees for natural cooling; installing energy efficient windows, doors and appliances; and using salvaged wood and wood from fast-growing trees.

*Thanks to Lynne Borsa, Finance Manager, YUHS, for contributing information to this article.*



# from the desk of

PAUL GENECCIN, MD

DIRECTOR, YALE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES

This past summer, I saw Michael Moore's film, *Sicko*. Whatever your opinion of the movie, it raises important questions, including whether there is a real system for American health care at all. Despite years of debate, millions of Americans remain uninsured or have coverage limited by high co-pays, deductibles, exclusions and obstacles preventing easy access to their supposed benefits. Moore didn't give big insurers much opportunity to explain themselves, but *Sicko* reinforces awareness that many of our friends and neighbors contend with impenetrable bureaucracies and decision-makers who do not listen. The very institutions we depend on can seem to be the biggest obstacles to getting the care we need.

As the director of a very different kind of health plan—one that provides both comprehensive coverage and accessible, affordable care to a large and diverse community—I nevertheless found that *Sicko* encouraged introspection about YHP. I thought particularly about how we ask for input from our members and what we do with the feedback we receive.

A major part of our formal feedback structure is YHP's Member Advisory Committee. This group, with members drawn from Yale's faculty, staff, retirees and students, provides essential feedback to YHP leadership. Members speak as individuals and as representatives of constituencies, and also help disseminate information to those constituencies.

YHP is structured so that we can hear from members directly, and I appreciate your calls, e-mails, and letters.

To supplement this direct feedback, we hire a professional agency to conduct telephone surveys of over 2500 YHP members annually about various aspects of care. Focus groups have provided us with perceptions on issues ranging from parking to appointment scheduling. Our comment card program and patient representative provide us with a steady stream of communications.

What do we do with your feedback? Often, responses are individual, such as helping someone with a challenging problem make an appointment with a specialist.

*YHP is structured so that we can hear from members directly...*

When we receive a number of similar comments, we take steps to improve systems. For instance, in response to members' desire to make follow-up appointments well in advance, we changed the scheduling systems to permit doing so. YHP's Joint Department Committee (our labor and management partnership to implement Best Practices) has identified service excellence as its major focus for the coming year; we are developing policies, systems and curricula to support a culture of excellence for our entire staff, and service excellence is currently our most important priority.

Service excellence begins with ease of using the YHP system. We have made progress in areas including phone access, shorter wait times for appointments, and improved communications about referrals and test results.

Wait times for routine primary appointments are shorter in many departments than last year, and appointment scheduling has become easier; still, we know that we can do better and are continuing to make improvements. Benefits covered by YHP are under review and I hope that we can soon offer a wider array of services. We are re-writing our Member Handbook in response to suggestions.

We want to hear from you, both about what we're doing right and what needs improving. Please contact us by:

- emailing [member.services@yale.edu](mailto:member.services@yale.edu);
- filling out a comment card, either by hand or electronically (<http://www.yale.edu/yhp/>), using the "communicating with us" link;
- using the same URL to identify and contact your Member Advisory Committee representative;
- calling or emailing patient representative Vicki Eisler (203-432-0109 or [vicki.eisler@yale.edu](mailto:vicki.eisler@yale.edu));
- contacting the department chief and/or manager (contact information on our web site);
- sending me an email or letter.

Know that my colleagues and I will read your suggestions, respond promptly and do our best to meet your needs. We want our members to feel that the system we have here at Yale can work the way we all want it to: as a trusted resource for improving health, curing disease and alleviating distress. Most of all, we want you to know that we're here, and that we're listening.



# QUESTIONS, ANSWERS

By answering your questions, this column will help you get the most out of your YHP membership.

Send your questions to: [member.services@yale.edu](mailto:member.services@yale.edu) and write "newsletter question" in the subject line.

**Infusion Service** With an increasing number of medications now available on an outpatient basis—medications that used to be given only in hospitals—YHP's infusion suite provides a unique service: a specialized outpatient area where people who need intravenous drug therapies can be treated in quiet and comfort and at times that fit into their schedules. Infusion service hours are 8:30–5:00 every weekday.

**Q. What types of medications are delivered through infusion?**

A. A wide variety of medications, including antibiotics, chemotherapy drugs, and immunoglobins. This is also the area where blood transfusions are done on an outpatient basis.

**Q. Why would a medication be delivered intravenously?**

A. Some drugs come only in that form. In other cases, your clinician may have determined that the drug will be more effective if delivered directly into the bloodstream.

**Q. Doesn't IV therapy usually require hospitalization?**

A. Sometimes it does. But often, patients do very well receiving their medications on an outpatient basis which allows a return to normal activities. Occasionally, patients may need to stay overnight for an infusion session.

**Q. How long does an infusion session take?**

A. The duration depends on the substance being delivered. For instance, IV antibiotics are often infused in 15–20 minutes, while a chemotherapy session may take a few hours.

**Q. Is any preparation necessary before an infusion session?**

A. Usually not. If there is, your clinician will let you know.

**Q. Who staffs the service?**

A. The infusion suite is staffed by registered nurses with specialized training and certification. All medications are ordered by physicians.

**Q. What if I need infusion treatments over a long period of time?**

A. Many patients who need infusion therapy over a long period, or who need several treatments a week, can learn to administer their own IVs at home, coming into the service for periodic check-ins. Your clinicians and the infusion service nurses can discuss this option with you.

## Women's Health Program on tap for October

Yale Health Plan and the YHP Ob/Gyn Department invite you to participate in our annual October Women's Health Program. All presentations will be offered at the Presidents' Room, Woolsey Hall, at the corner of College and Grove Streets. Lunch is provided and all events are free, but registration is required. RSVP to YHP Office of Health Promotion and Education at 203.432.1826, which is also the number to call for more information.

**Wednesday, October 10  
12:00 noon**

**HEALTHY SKIN:  
WOMEN AND DERMATOLOGY**

**Sugura Imaeda, MD**  
*Chief of Dermatology, Yale University Health Services  
Chief of Dermatology, West Haven Veterans  
Administration Medical Center  
Assistant Professor of Dermatology,  
Yale University School of Medicine*

**Wednesday, October 17  
12:00 noon**

**SEXUAL HEALTH AND OTHER  
ISSUES NO ONE TALKS ABOUT**

**Carole T. Goldberg, PsyD**  
*Psychologist: Yale University Health  
Services, Mental Health & Counseling Center  
Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry,  
Yale University School of Medicine  
Director, S.H.A.R.E. Center—Sexual Harassment &  
Assault Resources & Education*



# YHP staff

## Employees Honored

Each year we honor staff members, both clinical and administrative, whose service exemplifies our mission of providing the highest quality, patient-focused care.



Back row L to R: Slawomir Mejnartowicz, Stephanie Christides, Evelyn Morrissey, Lawrence Young, Daniel Geisser; front row: Cindy Kolodecik, Mary Beth Massaro. Missing from photo: Michelle Brei

Photo courtesy of Vicki Eisler.

### Employee of the Year

#### Evelyn Morrissey, RN

The assistant manager in Urgent Care, Morrissey has been with YHP since 2000. Described by colleagues as an organized, thorough, compassionate leader who never asks someone to do something that she would not do herself, she is known also for excellent clinical judgment and ability to provide expert nursing care to the department's wide variety of patients—"a model working manager." Respected by the entire staff, Morrissey also participates on many committees, has developed several operational systems, and "helps reduce stress in her department with her home-made coffee cakes."

### Clinician of the Year

#### Michelle Brei, PNP, APRN

A nurse practitioner in Pediatrics since 2005, Brei combines "impressive clinical knowledge and skills" with "spirit and energy that are inspirational." She is "willing to adjust her schedule to meet patient needs" and is expert at working with the full range of patients in her department—from advising families learning to care for and adjust to their newborn babies to counseling teenagers with psychological issues, to helping families cope with whatever life situations they're dealing with—all with "sensitivity, compassion and thoroughness."

### Physician of the Year

#### Slawomir Mejnartowicz, MD

A "respectful, considerate and knowledgeable physician" who is "well-educated not only as a doctor, but in each patient's medical history," Mejnartowicz has been with YHP's Internal Medicine Department since 2006. Valued by his peers for his hard work and careful preparation—"In one short year he has taken on a patient panel of 120 diabetics and has passed virtually every benchmark we have set"—he is also praised by his patients as a "truly outstanding physician" with an "excellent bedside manner." His patients, notes a colleague, "are crazy about him."

### Consultant of the Year

#### Lawrence Young, MD

Lawrence (Larry) Young, Professor of Internal Medicine at Yale Medical School and Director of the Cardiac Metabolism Research Program, has been YHP's primary cardiology consultant since 1998. Valued by colleagues as "an outstanding teacher," he is "appreciated most by both colleagues and patients as an exemplary physician," who stays at the forefront of his field and inspires confidence and loyalty with his "gift of making patients feel that he has no more important job than to listen to and advise them." People who work with him know his assistant, Augusta Bowlby—and with his typical self-deprecating humor, he comments that "Gus" deserves this award as much as he does.

### Director's Awards

#### Stephanie Christides

Senior administrative assistant in Member Services, Christides has been on staff since 1987. "Her ability to ask the right question so that she can provide correct and thorough answers" has helped YHP build strong relationships with all of Yale's schools." She can be counted on to provide professional and efficient responses to a range of problems, and "maintains a sense of humor during the most hectic portions of the academic year." She is "a great resource for unusual situations—say a name and within seconds she has the information at her fingertips—and if she doesn't have the answer she'll get it!"

#### Mary Beth Massaro

Massaro, an account assistant in the Claims Department, has been with YHP since 1988. "She goes beyond the call of duty to provide seamless care for members who are having difficulties with claims," providing a "safe place for patients to express their frustrations while defusing worrisome situations and handling their issues with efficiency and kindness." She is always willing to do additional research to resolve problems and is highly respected both by YHP staff and outside vendors who rely on her expertise, dependability and responsiveness.

#### Daniel Geisser, MD

"Well-known to staff by his bright pink lunchbox" Geisser has been in YHP's Internal Medicine Department since 1984. "Known as the 'red-headed doc' in both hair color and spirit, Geisser has a sterling reputation for intelligence and clinical astuteness combined with practicality," and has been a valuable mentor" to the APRN group. He is "devoted" to his patients and noted for his "diligent detective work," and was complimented by one patient as follows: "The highest compliment I can pay him is that he is a shrewd enough diagnostician to be worthy of becoming my graduate student in geochemistry should he wish to start a new career."

#### Cindy Kolodecik

"She knows and fixes everything," commented one colleague about Kolodecik, manager of the Department of Mental Health and Counseling. On staff at YHP since 1999, she is "unflappable, well-organized and computer-savvy." Her position has evolved over the past eight years to where the demands and workload have practically doubled, and her work behind-the-scenes has been "nothing short of amazing." Although she had worked at the University for many years prior to joining the department she "picked up easily the nature of what we do and always guides patients in the right direction," while remaining unflinchingly cheerful.



# information

## SURVEY HELPS PLANNING FOR WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

Results of a recent survey of a random sample of 500 of our women members, aged 40-60, are helping us plan for new and augmented services and programs for that group.

Based on feedback, we will be focusing program development on topics such as bone health, identifying and reducing medical risk factors, nutrition/weight/exercise, managing personal and social stressors, and menopause symptom management.

Additionally, we are planning expansion of access to information through the Internet, publications, and clinician appointments. Watch this newsletter and bulletin boards in the YUHS building for more information about programming and other educational opportunities.

Thanks to the women who responded. And if you have additional ideas to share with us—whether or not you were part of the original survey—you can drop a note to [member.services@yale.edu](mailto:member.services@yale.edu) [note “women’s programs” in the subject line].

## BRIDGE ALERT

The Hillhouse Avenue bridge was closed for repairs in June and will remain closed indefinitely. Visitors may enter the YUHS building at the intersection of Trumbull Street and Hillhouse Avenue, which now has 2-way access for health center traffic. Allow extra travel time when driving to YUHS, and consider alternate parking away from Hillhouse Avenue. Patient parking continues to be available in lot 37 on Trumbull Street.

Check our web site [www.yale.edu/yhp](http://www.yale.edu/yhp) for news, and contact the Director’s Office at 203-432-0076 with questions.

## yale health care

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17 Hillhouse Avenue  
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## YHP offers Weight Watchers® programs and discounts

Maintaining a healthy weight not only helps you feel better, but can also help prevent or reduce the severity of chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. YHP is making available discounted Weight Watchers® programs for members who are looking for help with weight loss. Weight Watchers® is generally recognized as a moderate and sensible weight loss program. Options are as follows:

### Online subscriptions

You can follow Weight Watchers step-by-step online, with interactive tools and resources like a weight tracker, progress charts, restaurant guides, and recipes and meal ideas and access to the Weight Watchers® online community. Two online options are available:

- Sign up for 3 months for \$55 and save \$10 off the regular price.
- Choose the 12-month option for \$166.70 and save \$50 off the regular price.

To access the YHP member discount for the Weight Watchers® online subscription, go to the YHP website: <http://www.yale.edu/yhp/> and click Weight Watchers.

### Local meeting vouchers

This pre-paid plan offers the flexibility of attending Weight Watchers® meetings in your community. You benefit from an experienced leader and the proven advantage of group support. Meeting vouchers for 10 weeks are available to YHP members for \$109 plus tax. To purchase, call 800-710-4663.

### At-home deluxe kits

Information and resources to follow the Weight Watchers® plan step-by-step at home. It includes a guidebook, a pedometer, the Complete Food and Dining Out Companions, a points booster slide to compute physical activity, a food diary, workout guides, the TurnAround Program Cookbook, a one-year subscription to Weight Watchers® magazine and more. Available to members for a discounted price of \$119.95 plus tax, shipping and handling. To purchase, call 800-710-4663.



## Hospitalist joins staff



Adam Smith, D.O., has joined the YUHS medical staff and will serve as the health plan's hospitalist. A graduate of the West Virginia School of Osteopathic

Medicine, Smith recently completed the Yale University Primary Care Internal Medicine residency program, during which time he worked also at Waterbury Hospital. Smith will provide inpatient care as an attending physician to health plan members both at Yale-New Haven Hospital and in our Inpatient Care Facility (ICF). Interested in travel, language and culture, Smith is a past participant of Yale's Johnson & Johnson Physician Scholars Program where, as a member of the Yale International Health Program, he served six weeks in the rural Taranaki District of New Zealand.

## What is a hospitalist?

According to the Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM), "Hospitalists are physicians whose primary professional focus is the general medical care of hospitalized patients. Activities include patient care, teaching and research..." Although the specialty has been around for nearly thirty years, the number of hospitalists has increased significantly in the past decade.

Hospital medicine, like emergency medicine, is organized around a site of care (the hospital), rather than an organ system (e.g. cardiology), a disease (e.g. oncology), or patients' ages (e.g. pediatrics). However, unlike specialists in emergency departments or critical care units, hospitalists work with patients throughout the hospital experience, often seeing patients in the ER, admitting them to inpatient and/or critical care units, and coordinating post-acute care.

Hospitalists typically spend most or all of their work days in a hospital, and thus can be more readily available to patients than doctors who spend much of the day in offices or clinic settings. In addition to patient care, hospitalists are often involved in developing and managing aspects of hospital operations such as inpatient flow and quality assurance.

The majority of hospitalists are internal medicine physicians. Others, including pediatricians, obstetricians, family practice physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants/associates, can also practice as hospitalists.

## Keep your balance

How's your balance? Stand with one foot 12 inches off the ground and see how long you can maintain the position.

You should be able to balance for 24 to 28 seconds if you are between 20 and 49. Between 50 and 59, the average is 21 seconds. Ten seconds is average between 60 and 69, and four seconds between 70 and 79.

Poor balance increases the risk of falling—a major cause of injury and disability in older adults. Here are some simple exercises to improve balance.

- **One-leg stand:** Balance on one leg while doing everyday tasks, such as brushing your teeth, watching TV, or standing in line.
- **Heel-to-toe walk:** Stand straight and hold your arms out to your sides. Place one foot directly in front of the other, with the heel of your front foot touching the toes of your back foot. Practice walking forward and back in an imaginary straight line.



- **Squat sit:** With a chair behind you, squat as if you were about to sit. Just before your bottom makes contact with the chair, stand back up. Work your way up to ten reps.

Caution! If you aren't steady on your feet, hold on to a table, chair, or counter for support, and make sure someone's on hand to catch you if you start to tip over.

# healthy ideas



## HAVE A LAUGH

A recent study from the Indiana University School of Nursing shows that laughter provides both a psychological and a physical boost. It helps reduce stress and boosts immunity, actually decreasing stress hormones such as epinephrine and cortisol, and revving up natural killer T cells that are the first line of defense against infection and cell damage. Getting some laughter each day is another way—in addition to exercise, good diet and relaxation—to counter stress.

## LET IT OUT

The body has a remarkable capacity for cleansing. Sweat removes salt, urine removes waste, and mucus traps bacteria. Tears also serve a purpose. Your body makes several kinds:

- Basal tears are produced continuously to lubricate eyes; that layer of moisture also helps prevent damage from air currents and bits of floating debris.
- Irritant tears are produced when the eyes are hit, for instance by flying sand, road grit, or insects.
- Emotional tears are released in moments of intense feeling.

Unlike basal or irritant tears, which are protective, emotional tears are hormonal and chemically different. Emotional tears carry stress hormones and are a way of getting rid of them. So go ahead and have a good cry!



## From the Pharmacy

### DONE WITH DRUGS? DON'T FLUSH!

Although our tendency is to pour out-of-date or unused medications into the sink or toilet, doing so causes water pollution and has adverse effects on septic systems and sewage treatment plants, as well as on fish and other aquatic life.

Trace amounts of all kinds of drugs have also been found in some drinking water supplies because they pass through septic systems and sewage plants untreated; you or your family members could wind up inadvertently and unknowingly ingesting a stew of other people's medications.

### REFERENCE CHART FOR DISPOSAL OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES

Products	Best way to dispose
<b>ampoules, vials, and IV bags</b>	Do not empty or open the bag/container. Wrap with tape to minimize breakage, then place in an opaque plastic container (such as an empty yogurt or margarine tub). Wrap the outside of the container or bag with additional duct or shipping tape to prevent leakage to further obscure the contents. Place container in trash. Do not place in recycling bin!
<b>chemotherapy drugs</b>	Some chemotherapy drugs may have special disposal requirements. Ask your health care provider about proper disposal.
<b>mercury thermometers</b>	Bring to a household hazardous waste collection or call your town's recycling contact or public works. Do not put the thermometer in your trash. Find a hazardous waste collection date and location nearest you.
<b>sharps (needles and lancets)</b>	Place in a puncture-proof, hard plastic container with a screw-on cap, like a bleach or detergent bottle Seal the container with the original lid and wrap with duct tape. Place the tightly sealed container in a bag and put it in your trash. Do not place in your recycling bin! As an alternative, look into mail-back programs ( <a href="http://www.sustainablehospitals.org">www.sustainablehospitals.org</a> ) or check with your local hospital.

So the first rule is: Do not flush prescription or over-the-counter (OTC) items down the sink or toilet!

The best way to dispose of medications is to put them in the trash. In Connecticut, most trash is burned at resource recovery centers under high temperatures that destroy these products.

For other medical supplies, see the chart for proper disposal techniques. By following these instructions, you will protect your privacy, discourage unintended consumption of drugs and protect our water.

### Tips to reduce the need for disposal of medications and medical supplies

- If possible, ask your doctor to give you a smaller amount of a prescription or a sample of a drug that you are taking for the first time to see if it works for you. This may save you money and will also eliminate the need for throwing away the drug away if it doesn't work. Do the same for animal prescriptions.
- Look at the expiration date on OTC products. Will you be able to use all of a product before it expires? If not, consider purchasing a smaller amount.
- Look into mail-back programs for sharps (needles and lancets). The Sustainable Hospitals website ([www.sustainablehospitals.org](http://www.sustainablehospitals.org)) has a list of companies that provide safety containers or check with your clinician's office or local hospital.

## yale health care

Yale Health Plan  
Member Services  
17 Hillhouse Avenue  
P.O. Box 208237  
New Haven, CT 06520-8237



Please remember that free parking for YHP members is available both in the lot right next to 17 Hillhouse Avenue and in parking lot 37, just across Trumbull Street.

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