



## Featured Health Alert

### *Proper Drug Disposal*



#### Properly Disposing of Medication

Individuals, caregivers, and residential providers should remove expired and/or unused medicines from the home as quickly as possible to help reduce the chance of medication errors like accidentally ingesting the medication or the misuse of the medication.

Expired, unwanted, or unused medicines should be discarded consistent with DBHDS Rules and Regulations for Licensing Providers in that the provider shall promptly dispose of discontinued drugs, outdated drugs, and drug containers with worn, illegible, or missing labels according to the applicable regulations of the Virginia Board of Pharmacy (12VAC35-105-770). Providers and caregivers can dispose of medication through in-home procedures or through Drug Take Back programs.



#### Drug Take Back Programs

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is sponsored by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in communities nationwide. The next date can be found on the FDA website. However, many communities also have their own drug take back programs. Check with your local law enforcement officials or the Virginia Board of Pharmacy website at [www.dhp.virginia.gov/pharmacy](http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/pharmacy).

Additionally, your local pharmacist will have information on proper medication disposal and many pharmacies offer their own Drug Take Back Days.

#### Disposing Medication at Home

There are three ways to dispose of medicine at home. Proper disposal of medication often relies on the type of drug. Some drugs can be flushed whereas others should be discarded in the trash.

##### Flushing medication

Because some medicines could be especially harmful to others, they have specific directions to immediately flush them down the sink or toilet when they are no longer needed. Check the label or consult the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's list of medicines recommended for disposal by flushing. This list is available on the [fda.gov](http://fda.gov) website under resources.

##### Disposing medications in household trash

Almost all medicines can be thrown into your household trash. These include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs in pills, liquids, drops, patches, creams, and inhalers. If selecting this method for disposal, here are a few tips for discarding the medication:

- Remove the drugs from their original containers and mix with something undesirable, such as used coffee grounds, dirt, or cat litter.
- Put the mixture in something you can close like a resealable bag or old coffee container.
- Scratch out all personal information on the empty medicine packaging to protect identity and privacy.

##### Use a Medication Disposal Pouch or Container

Finally, another option is to obtain a drug disposal bag from your Local Health Department. Find the closest health department at [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov).

## Gearing up for Flu Season

Flu season usually begins in October and lasts through February. Influenza, most commonly known as the flu, is a contagious viral infection. The flu can last a few days but can linger up to two weeks. For individuals with disabilities who may have multiple comorbidities (other medical conditions) the flu can lead to more serious complications like pneumonia. Complications, if left untreated, can lead to hospitalization and even death. It is important to prevent the transmission of the flu and equally as important to vaccinate each year.

In residential and congregate settings, the flu can be introduced by newly admitted residents, staff, and visitors. The spread of the flu can easily occur between and among residents and whoever enters the home. During flu season, providers should implement daily monitoring for respiratory illness among all individuals including residents, staff, and visitors.



### Prevent the Flu

- Get the flu vaccine
- Wash your hands frequently
- Stay away from people who are sick
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing

Schedule an appointment with your medical provider, call your local pharmacy, or visit the Health Map Vaccine Finder at [vaccinefinder.org](http://vaccinefinder.org) to get your annual flu vaccine!



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2018). Interim guidance for influenza outbreak management in long-term care facilities. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm>

## Office of Integrated Health

### Team Highlight

The Office of Integrated Health initiated the Mobile Rehab Engineering (MRE) Team to meet the ongoing Durable Medical Equipment (DME) needs of individuals residing in communities throughout Virginia, as Training Centers began to close. The MRE Team offers services which include: repairs, safety assessments, pressure washing and custom adaptations to DME. Services are open to all DBHDS Regions 1-5. Assessments can take place at private homes, group homes, schools, day programs, etc., and are all free of charge. If you have a DME-related question; would like to schedule an appointment; or would like more information about additional DME resources in Virginia; please contact Tammie Williams. *\*Please note: the MRE Team does not do assessments for new wheelchairs.*

The MRE staff have years of experience with repairing all types of medical durable equipment including creative solutions to problems with usability and custom adaptations.

Tammie Williams, EdD, MSN, RN  
Registered Nurse Care Consultant  
& Mobile Rehab Engineering Team Leader  
Email: [tammie.williams@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:tammie.williams@dbhds.virginia.gov)  
(804) 347-2919



Danny Thomas Rehabilitation Mechanic  
[danny.thomas@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:danny.thomas@dbhds.virginia.gov)

Mike Preston Rehabilitation Mechanic  
[michael.preston@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:michael.preston@dbhds.virginia.gov)

Jonathan Rea Rehabilitation Mechanic  
[jonathan.rea@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:jonathan.rea@dbhds.virginia.gov)

Michael Shumaker Rehabilitation Mechanic  
[michael.shumaker@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:michael.shumaker@dbhds.virginia.gov)