



### ADHD Drug Risks

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has advised manufacturers of all attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) drugs to alert patients about possible cardiovascular or psychiatric risks associated with taking the drugs.

The agency has asked the manufacturers to develop medication guidelines that will be given to patients, families, or caregivers when ADHD drugs are dispensed, an action resulting from FDA reviews of these medications. One such review noted reports of sudden death in patients with underlying heart problems and of stroke and heart attack in adults with other cardiac risk factors. Another found a small increased risk—about 1 per 1000 patients—of drug-related psychiatric adverse events such as hearing voices, paranoia, and mania, even in patients with no history of psychiatric problems.

In May 2006, the FDA had required manufacturers to revise ADHD drug labeling for physicians to reflect these cardiac and psychiatric risks. Preliminary patient medication guides for each ADHD drug are available at <http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/infopage/ADHD/default.htm>.

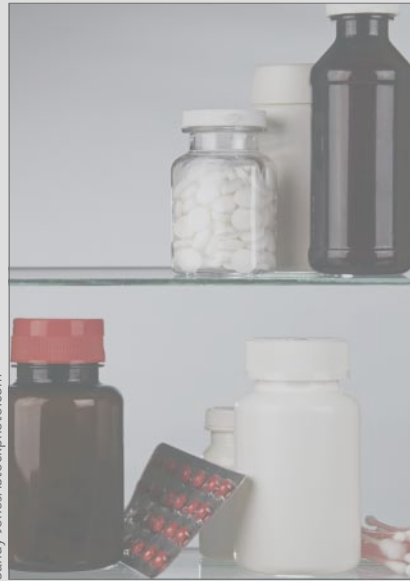
### Drug Disposal

New guidelines for the disposal of unused or expired medications call on patients to take several precautions to avoid the diversion of these drugs and to protect water sources. The guidelines were released in February by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency ([http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/factsh/proper\\_disposal.html](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/factsh/proper_disposal.html)).

The guides urge individuals to

- Remove the drugs from their original containers before disposal.
- Mix the drugs with undesirable substances such as used coffee grounds

or kitty litter, place them in nondescript sealed containers, and throw them in the trash (a measure to help prevent diversion or accidental ingestion by children or pets).



Federal officials are urging individuals to take certain steps to prevent drug diversion or environmental contamination caused by improperly discarded prescription drugs.

- Flush prescription drugs down the toilet only if the drug's label specifies to do so.
- Return unused or expired prescriptions to designated pharmaceutical take-back locations.

The guidelines are aimed at reducing abuse of prescription drugs, particularly powerful pain killers.

Scientists have detected small amounts of prescription drugs in waterways. However, the environmental or health impact of these contaminants is unclear.

### Herbal Risks for Boys

Lavender and tea tree oils found in toiletries may have endocrine-disrupting effects on boys, according to a report by researchers from the National Institute of Environmental Health and Sciences (NIEHS).

The report includes case studies of three boys aged 4, 7, and 10 years who developed enlarged breast tissue after regular use of soap, skin lotion, shampoos or styling products containing lavender or tea tree oils (Hendley D et al. *N Engl J Med*. 2007;356:479-485). The boys, who were otherwise healthy, had normal hormonal levels when they were diagnosed. The symptoms subsided in all three boys after they avoided products containing lavender or tea tree oils for several months.

Further laboratory experiments by NIEHS scientists using human cells found that the oils mimic the effects of estrogen, a hormone that stimulates breast development in women, or inhibit the effects of androgens, hormones that inhibit breast growth and stimulate masculine characteristics.

Large epidemiological studies will be necessary to verify the results, said co-author Ken Korach, PhD.

### Alcohol Treatment Guide

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has released an updated guide, *Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much: A Clinician's Guide*, for physicians treating patients with alcohol problems (<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/guide>).

For the first time, the publication includes instructions for primary care physicians and nurses who wish to provide medication-based therapy to patients with alcohol dependence. According to the agency, such treatment is crucial because many patients lack access to specialty treatment or refuse such care.

Other new features include a handout that describes strategies to help patients reduce their drinking or to quit, a Web page with resources for clinicians and patients, and information about the recently approved monthly injectable version of naltrexone. —Bridget M. Kuehn