

Meeting 7: Begin Workbook 5: Drug Disposal & Chemicals



1. Thank everyone for participating.
2. Ask your Action Step leaders to report the progress with “Energy Efficiency, “Solid Waste & Recycling”, and “Education”.
3. At this meeting, CHOOSE TWO Action Steps from “Workbook 5: Drug Disposal & Chemicals”: <https://mygreendoctor.org/workbook-5-drug-disposal-chemicals/> . We recommend choosing from “Discarding Pharmaceuticals”, “Green Cleaning Supplies”, “Green Hand Soaps”, or “Say ‘NO’ to Mercury”. **Each of these is provided below.** Find a leader for each Action Step that you choose.
4. Announce the date for the next meeting when you will continue with “Drug Disposal & Chemicals”.

After the meeting, fill out the Green Team Notes form. Keep your Notes very brief– not more than 5 minutes for the Notes: <https://mygreendoctor.org/resources/green-team-notes-form/>



Discarding Pharmaceuticals

Adopt a policy for safe disposal of prescription medications and non-prescription products by the office, your families, and patients. Prepare a one-page handout for your office and patients. My Green Doctor’s “Resources” tab has brochures, handouts, posters, and blogs for you. Every time your office recommends a new medication to patients, remind them of safely discarding their old pharmaceuticals. Print our free posters & buy simple picture frames to inform your colleagues and patients:

<https://mygreendoctor.org/resources/waiting-room-posters/>

- Never discard medicines in the sink or toilet as these can contaminate public water supplies.
- Most medicines, vitamins, and herbal medicines can be thrown into your household or office trash. These include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs in pills, liquids, drops, patches, creams, and inhalers.



- Scratch out personal information on the empty packaging to protect privacy.
- If you are concerned that the medicines such as pain medicines could be misused by others, mix them with something undesirable, such as used coffee grounds, dirt, or cat litter, before discarding them in the trash.



- Some medicines come with instructions for their disposal. Some inhalers can be dangerous if the container is punctured. You can ask your pharmacist.
- Medicines can be returned to most pharmacies for disposal.
- Some communities have “Drop Boxes” for collecting medicines safely.
- If you are not sure what is advised in your community, go online or telephone your pharmacist, local government, your trash collector, or your hazardous waste collection center.



Green Cleaning Supplies

Adopt an office policy to use only “green chemicals” endorsed by Safer Choice (from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency), Green Seal, EcoLogo, or a similar organization. These are products that are safer for you, safer for the workers who made them, and safer for the environment. Products to identify in your office include hand soaps, general cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners, carpet cleaners, glass cleaners, floor strippers, and waxes. Never use bleach, a common cause of lung injury to health professionals. The person who sells and delivers your cleaning products may know about safe chemical options. Consider sharing with your colleagues and patients our “Green Cleaning” blog: <https://mygreendoctor.org/green-cleaning-an-easy-guide-for-homes-offices/> . Tell your patients that you use safer, “greener” chemicals!



Green Hand Soaps

Adopt a policy to use only Green hand cleansers in public areas such as restrooms. Avoid “anti-bacterial” products as these generally are not necessary, are expensive, and can harm the environment.

- Never use soaps containing triclosan, a chemical that is particularly hazardous.
- Consider sharing with your colleagues and patients our “Cheaper & Greener” blog: <https://mygreendoctor.org/safe-soap-cheaper-greener-by-avoiding-triclosan-2/>.
- Display signs stating that you use only environmentally-certified cleaning products for the safety of your patients and of the environment.
- Print a My Green Doctor blog on this topic for patients and staff.



Say “NO” to Mercury



Adopt a policy to eliminate all mercury from your office. Mercury is a metal used in liquid form in many medical devices, such as sphygmomanometers, thermometers, and thermostats. Mercury when spilled will evaporate at room temperature to become a highly toxic gas that causes nerve damage, kidney disease, and harm to unborn children. Take an inventory of your mercury-containing devices. Plan a

timetable to rid the office and your homes of mercury-containing devices. Fluorescent lightbulbs contain mercury: always discard these safely. See our “Workbook 1: Energy Efficiency” for more information on bulbs.