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## Study Reveals 17 Different Pharmaceuticals in Wastewater

by Dorien Herremans ([see all articles by this author](#))

(NaturalNews) What happens to medicines after they leave your body? Norwegian researchers have examined the presence of twenty toxic pharmaceuticals in the wastewater coming from two Oslo hospitals. Their stunning conclusion is that seventeen of these toxins were actually present in the wastewater! When they examined the wastewater flowing into the water treatment works (WTWs), they again found twelve pharmaceuticals.

Ok, so there are chemical compounds in our wastewater you might say, that's why it's waste. Wrong. Although there are a lot of wastewater treatment works (WTWs) on our planet, a considerable amount of wastewater still flows back into nature. In this case, the pharmaceutically polluted water flows into the [Oslo fjord environment](#). Furthermore, when they examined the purified water coming from the WTWs, the researchers were still able to detect eleven pharmaceuticals in the 'clean' water. This is cause for concern about the environment, people, and animals living in these fjords. This scientific study was commissioned by the The Norwegian Pollution Control Authority (SFT). The SFT wanted to study the presence of 20 pharmaceuticals in the wastewater during a twelve week period.

### Pharmaceutical drugs are polluting our water

When Norwegian researchers examined the wastewater coming from two hospitals (Rikshospitalet and Ullevål) they were able to detect all of the 20 studied substances, with the exception of three. Then they examined the water just before it entered the purification plant. At this point in the chain, the chemicals were already diluted. Still, the researchers were able to find twelve different substances above detection level. The third phase in this scientific study focused on the quality of purified water. When they checked the water flowing out of the water treatment works, there were still eleven pharmaceutical substances present.

The substances that were present in the highest concentration throughout this research study were paracetamol, ibuprofen, diclofenac and metoprolol. After purification, these substances were still detectable in the water (along with seven others). This means that the WTWs are not able to filter out pharmaceutical drugs, on the contrary, they might even be responsible for toxic by-products left in the purified water:

*"Scientists around the world often find drugs in water samples taken from streams and other waterways, but little is known about by-products of those drugs created during chlorine treatment or time spent in the environment,"* said the researchers, headed by NIST chemist Mary Bedner.

In an earlier study done in 2004, researchers from the US National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) examined what happens to chemical pharmaceuticals when they react with chlorine - a disinfectant commonly used in wastewater treatment. One of their conclusions was that paracetamol, which is highly present even in purified water, forms multiple byproducts when combined with chlorine, two of which are highly toxic. When pharmaceutical drugs react with

chlorine, they mostly form hydrophobic compounds, which tend to build up in the body. This study agrees with the Norwegian study, that water treatment works cannot fully purify water.

### What can we do about it?

There are still large areas that are not covered by water purification plants throughout the globe. In our chemical age, we almost forget that maybe our dishwasher water (or medicated urine) flows into a nearby brook. And even if our waste goes to WTWs, it is not guaranteed that it will be totally detoxified.

### Preventing is better than curing

Use natural products whenever you can. Try to avoid buying any products from drug companies. There are lots of natural alternatives available. You can even [build a pharmaceutical factory in your back yard and grow your medicine for free!](#)

If everyone starts taking responsibility and stops listening to the drug companies, we might be able to turn the results of the next SFT study drastically around. Saving the earth begins by saving ourselves!

## About the author

Dorien Herremans is a commercial engineer (MSc UA) and is currently a lecturer at Gesthotel University. She is the founder of <http://www.raw-vegan.org>, a living food network. She is also editor of Mind to Heart, the 'new earth' magazine (<http://www.mindtoheart.org>)

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