



Protect those you love by properly disposing of your unused medications

Getting Rid of Your Unused Medications is a Must

Take a minute to think about what's currently in your medicine cabinet. How many of those medications are you *actually* taking?

There are many dangers associated with not properly disposing of your unused or expired medications, so it's vital that you get rid of them immediately.

Even just one dose of some medications can cause serious harm, or death, if taken accidentally or not under the direction of your doctor.

Keep your family out of harm's way by educating yourself on the correct ways to dispose of unused medications.

What are the Risks of Keeping Unused Medications?

Collecting Old Medications

People often save old medications because the medicine was expensive or because they think they may need it later. This is risky because your medication needs can change over time.

Risks of keeping old medications:

- Taking expired medication that may no longer be safe or effective.
- If an antibiotic was stopped early and saved, an infection may return.
- Taking a dose of medicine that is no longer safe for you.
- Confusing old medications with current medications.
- Family members using leftover, high-risk medications, such as narcotics or muscle relaxants, could lead to overdose or addiction.

Accidental Poisoning

Accidental poisoning is when someone, often a child or pet, takes a medication not meant for them. It is a major reason for emergency room visits among children. Most poisonings occur when children are alone exploring places such as the closet, bathroom, or kitchen.

Ways to prevent accidental poisonings:

- Never leave medicine on a counter or tabletop.
- Store medicine in a place difficult for a child or pet to reach.
- Always relock the safety cap on the medicine bottle.
- Never throw away medication—including creams or used patches—in an unsecured trash can.
- Never keep medication or over-the-counter products that are no longer needed or expired.

WAYS TO GET RID OF YOUR OLD MEDICATIONS

Drop Off Locations

Ask your local pharmacy if they take back old medications. Many do or can direct you to a secure medication drop-off nearby. There is even a nationally recognized day for taking back your medications!

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is a day when law enforcement agencies have official medication drop-off locations. There are several events per year.

The next National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is April 27th from 10:00 AM to 2:00

For more information go to <https://takebackday.dea.gov/>

Throw Away in the Trash

If you cannot take your old medicine to a drop-off location you can throw away most medications in your household trash.

Follow these steps to safely throw out medications:

1. Remove the medication from its container and mix it with dirt, coffee grounds, or used cat litter.
2. Place the mixture in a sealed plastic bag.
3. Throw the bag in the trash, where children or pets can't access it.
4. Destroy all information on the labels of empty prescription bottles.

Flush Down the Toilet

Authorities recommend you **not** flush most unneeded medications down the sink or toilet. Flushing medications can hurt the environment and drinking water. However, some medications carry such a high risk of death or drug abuse it is recommended you immediately flush unneeded medications down the toilet.

Examples of medications to flush down the toilet include:

- Opioids, such as oxycodone, morphine, or hydrocodone
- Anxiety medications/sedatives, such as diazepam, alprazolam, or lorazepam
- Stimulants, such as Adderall™ and Concerta™

Poisoning and Overdose Basics

When to Suspect Poisoning or Overdose

Poisoning or overdose can sometimes look like other medical conditions. Watch for clues such as empty pill bottles, scattered pills, or strange stains or odors nearby. Signs and symptoms can include vomiting, difficulty breathing, drowsiness, and confusion.

When to Call for Help

Call 911 immediately if the person is drowsy or unconscious, having difficulty breathing, restless or agitated, or having seizures.

Call the Poison Helpline at 800-222-1222 if the person is stable with no symptoms.

What to Do While Waiting for Help

- **Swallowed poison:** Remove anything remaining from their mouth.
- **Poison on the skin:** Put on gloves and remove contaminated clothes. Rinse the skin with lukewarm water for 15-20 minutes.
- **Poison in the eye:** Remove contact lenses and gently flush the eye with lukewarm water for at least 15 minutes.
- **Inhaled poison:** Get to fresh air as soon as possible.

Test Your Knowledge!

1. When is the next National Prescription Drug Take Back Day?
2. When do most accidental poisonings occur in children?
3. T or F: Authorities recommend that you flush all unneeded medications down the toilet.
4. Who can you contact in order to find a drug drop-box in your area?
5. T or F: Old or unused medications should not be kept and be disposed of properly.

Answers: 1- April 27, 2019 from 10 am to 2 pm; 2- When children are alone and exploring places such as the closet, bathroom, or kitchen; 3-F; 4- The local pharmacy; 5- T

We care about your health and well-being and our staff of registered nurse care managers, wellness coaches, mental health professionals, and clinical pharmacists are here to help. If you have questions, please call 855-586-2568, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. MT.