



HOW TO PROPERLY DISPOSE OF YOUR UNUSED MEDICINES

Unused or expired prescription medications are a public safety issue, leading to potential accidental poisoning, misuse, and overdose. Proper disposal of unused drugs saves lives and protects the environment.

Drug Disposal Guidelines

If no disposal instructions are given on the prescription drug labeling and no prescription drug take-back program is available in your area, then follow these simple steps to throw the drugs in the household trash:

1. Remove the medicine from its original container and mix it with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter.
2. Place the mixture in a sealable bag, empty bag, or other container to prevent medicine from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.

Visit the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) website (www.deatakeback.com) or call (800) 882-9539 for more information and to find an authorized collection in your community. The site also provides valuable information about DEA's National Take-Back Initiative.

Resources

For more information on preventing prescription drug misuse, go to the following websites:

- www.dea.gov
- www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com
- www.justthinktwice.com
- www.campusdrugprevention.gov

For more information on the safe disposal of pharmaceuticals, go to the following websites:

Environmental Protection Agency

- How to Dispose of Medicines Properly

<https://www.epa.gov/household-medication-disposal>

Food and Drug Administration

- Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/safe-disposal-medicines/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know>

- How to Dispose of Unused Medicines

<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/where-and-how-dispose-unused-medicines>



Additional Tips

- Scratch out all identifying information on the prescription drug to make it unreadable. This will help to protect your identity and the privacy of your personal health information.
- You must not share your prescription drugs – they were prescribed to you.

Can I Flush Medicine Down the Sink or Toilet?

If the abovementioned disposal options are not readily available, one option is to flush the medicines down the sink or toilet as soon as they are no longer needed. Some communities may prohibit this practice out of concern over the trace levels of drug residues found in rivers, lakes, and community drinking water supplies.

Do not flush medicines down the sink or toilet unless the prescription drug labeling or patient information that accompanied the medicine specifically instructs you to do so. Please also ensure you are compliant with your community's laws and regulations prior to taking such action.

Sources: Environmental Protection Agency, *How to Dispose of Medicines Properly*, 2011; Food and Drug Administration, *Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know*, 2017.