

## Safe Medication Storage & Disposal

Prescription drug abuse is a significant problem nationwide. Unwanted medicines left in the home can endanger others, particularly children, seniors, and pets, and can be subject to drug abuse or accidental ingestion/overdose. Proper disposal of unwanted or expired medications makes a difference for our community and our environment. Safe medication disposal programs have been shown to be the most convenient, cost-effective, and secure method of disposal.

As of 2019, all drug disposal costs for hospitals and pharmacies in New York will be covered by drug manufacturers, as a result of the Senate's "Drug Take Back Act," which was passed July 10, 2018 (for more information: <https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/senates-drug-take-back-act-becomes-law>.)

Most abused prescription drugs come from family and friends. Pharmaceutical drugs can be just as dangerous as street drugs when taken without a prescription or a doctor's supervision. Most teenagers abusing prescription drugs get them from family and friends – and the home medicine cabinet.

Unused prescriptions thrown in the trash can be retrieved and abused or illegally sold. Unused drugs that are flushed contaminate the water supply. Proper disposal of unused drugs save lives and protect the environment.

### How to dispose of unused/expired medicine

#### Medicine take-back options

Consumers and caregivers should remove expired or unused medicines from their home as quickly as possible to help reduce the chance that others may accidentally take or intentionally misuse the unneeded medicine. Medicine take-back options are the preferred way to safely dispose of most types of unneeded medicines. There are generally two kinds of take-back options: periodic events and permanent collection sites

##### *Periodic events*

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) periodically hosts National Prescription Drug Take-Back events where temporary collection sites are set up in communities nationwide for safe disposal of prescription drugs. A small number of medicines have specific directions to immediately flush them down the toilet when they are no longer needed, and a take-back option is not readily available. Local law enforcement agencies may also sponsor medicine take-back events in your community. Consumers can contact their local waste management authorities to learn about events in their area.

##### *Permanent collection sites*

Another option for consumers and long-term care facilities to dispose of unneeded medicines is to transfer these medicines to DEA-registered collectors, which safely and securely collect and dispose of

pharmaceuticals containing controlled substances and other medicines. Authorized permanent collection sites may be in retail pharmacies, hospital or clinic pharmacies, and law enforcement facilities. Some authorized collection sites may also offer mail-back programs or collection receptacles, sometimes called “drop-boxes,” to assist consumers in safely disposing of their unused medicines.

Visit the DEA’s website for more information about drug disposal, National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day events and to locate a DEA-registered collector in their area. To find an authorized collector, call the DEA Office of Diversion Control’s Registration Call Center at 1-800-882-9539 in their community.

## **Disposal in the household trash**

If no take-back programs or DEA-registered collectors are available in your area, and there are no specific disposal instructions in the product package insert, you can also follow these simple steps to dispose of most medicines in the household trash\*:

- Mix medicines (do not crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as dirt, cat litter, or used coffee grounds;
- Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag;
- Throw the container in your household trash; and
- Delete all personal information on the prescription label of empty pill bottles or medicine packaging, then dispose of the container.

\*Other technologies to provide additional options for patients to use to dispose of medicines in the household trash have been developed.

## **Flushing certain potentially dangerous medicines in the toilet**

A small number of medicines have specific instructions to immediately flush down the toilet when no longer needed and a take-back option is not readily available. These medicines may be especially harmful and, in some cases, fatal with just one dose if they are used by someone other than the person for whom they were prescribed. But as drug take-back programs and sites increase across the country, these could be options too, if one is readily available.

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

For more information on prescription drug abuse, go to:

[www.DEA.gov](http://www.DEA.gov) or call 1-800-822-9539

[www.GetSmartAboutDrugs.com](http://www.GetSmartAboutDrugs.com)

[www.JustThinkTwice.com](http://www.JustThinkTwice.com)