



How to Safely Discard Medications National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day!

April 27th is National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day — a great day to remove unneeded or expired prescription and store-bought over-the-counter (OTC) medications from your home.

Many people stuff old medications in cabinets and forget about them. Has your provider changed a prescription when you still had some left? Have you stopped a drug because you got better? Are any drugs expired? Do you have any OTC pills or supplements you no longer use? Now is a good time to find what's hidden in your medicine cabinet and dispose of them safely.

Why Does it Matter?

Sadly, medications find their way into the wrong hands, often with tragic results. Exposure to the toxic effects of medications (as well as marijuana, illicit drugs, nicotine and alcohol) are on the rise among young children, according to a report from the Center on Addiction.

In 2016, more than 30,000 calls were made to poison control centers about children 5 and younger accidentally exposed to addictive substances. The Center's [report](#) showed that the number of accidental opioid exposures among young children jumped 93% from 2000 to 2009, the time frame when opioid prescriptions increased dramatically nationwide.

It's not only young children who can suffer from having unneeded

medications in the house. What's safe for you may be harmful for someone else. Family members might confuse the wrong pill for their own, especially when they take many medications. Old prescriptions can be an easy source for those likely to abuse medications and can be a danger for pets too.

April's take-back day will be the 17th since the program started. The 16 previous events collected a total of 5,439.5 tons of medicines!

Safe Storage

Always keep your medications in a safe and secure location. When deciding where to put medicines, think children and pets of course, but also meddling teenagers and nosy guests. Many accidental exposures to drugs occur among people who took them from family and friends. Here are some storage tips:

- Pick a spot that is up high and out-of-sight. A bathroom medicine cabinet is not the best location since medicines should be kept cool and dry (heat and humidity can cause damage). If you take controlled substances like prescription pain drugs (those that have "street value"), you may need to hide them.
- Use a different shelf or space, box or basket to hold each family member's medications separately. It may help to label the shelf or box to avoid mix-ups.

Medication Disposal Locations Near You

To find a National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day location near you on April 27th, click [here](#). Sites will accept medications from 10 am to 2 pm.

If you need to dispose of medications safely before or after April 27th, click [here](#) to find a location.

Take-back programs allow for the safe and anonymous disposal of medications.

The information contained in this newsletter is for general, educational purposes. It should not be considered a replacement for consultation with your healthcare provider. If you have concerns about your health, please contact your healthcare provider.

- Take medicines over a counter or table. This reduces the chance that a pill will drop on the floor or down the drain. Pills that land on the floor can be gobbled quickly by pets or small children.
- Good light can help you read labels and recognize pills. Replace lids properly to prevent spills and access by young hands. Return medicines to their safe storage area right after taking them.
- Keep pills in their original containers to have quick access to dosage, refill information and expiration dates.

Safe Disposal

Disposing of unneeded or expired prescription or over-the-counter medications safely prevents people from using or taking them accidentally or intentionally. The safest way to dispose of medications is to participate in the national take-back day on April 27th or find the nearest permanent drop-off location. National take-back days also occur in October and communities often sponsor them periodically throughout the year. Many places, such as pharmacies and police stations, offer convenient year-round disposal boxes. See box for links to find one near you. If you live where there are no convenient drop-off spots, ask your pharmacist about mail-back programs.

If it is not convenient to drop-off medicines, your second option is to throw them away in the household trash. Take these safety steps:

- Remove medicines from their original container and mix them with coffee grounds, dirt, cat litter or other undesirable material in a container that can be closed. A zipper storage bag, for example, will prevent the drug mixture from spilling or leaking.
- Put the container in the garbage.

- Scratch out your name and prescription (Rx) number from the labels and recycle or dispose of the packaging.

While it's considered the last resort, flushing medicines down the sink or toilet is an option for those that have a high potential to be abused or can be harmful if taken accidentally. Use this [link](#) (scroll down) to see the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) list of medicines that can be flushed.

The FDA studied the effects of flushing medicines on the safety of the water supply. The study showed that medications appeared in drinking waters in trace amounts, far below levels thought to affect people. Be careful with what gets flushed so you can help keep the water supply safe.

When there is a death in the family or when a loved one moves to a long-term care or hospice facility, special efforts to dispose of their medications may be needed. Before a move to hospice or just before people die, they often take opioids (strong pain relievers) and other abusable medicines. It's important to dispose of these medications as soon as possible. Police warn about "obituary burglars," those seeking opioids and other valuables while family members are attending the loved one's funeral.

Not all items can be disposed of at drop-off spots. Needles should be collected in sharps containers, which may be disposed of at household hazardous waste collection sites, health departments, hospitals or pharmacies. Ask your provider or pharmacist for how your area handles disposal of other items such as sprays, inhalers and creams.

Do you have questions about your medications and how to safely dispose of unneeded ones? Let KnovaSolutions help you. Call us at **800/355-0885**, Monday-Friday, 8 am-8 pm, MT.