

Medication Disposal Guide

Is your medicine cabinet filled with expired drugs or medications you no longer use? How should you dispose of them?

Most drugs can be thrown in the trash, but you should take certain precautions before tossing them out. A few drugs should be flushed down the toilet. And a growing number of “take-back” programs offer another safe way to dispose of your medications.

Summary of the Federal Guidelines for Drug Disposal

- **Follow disposal instructions** on the drug label or patient information that comes with your medication. Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet unless this information tells you to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you are unsure.
- If available in your area, use a **drug take-back program** that allows you to bring unused drugs to a central location for disposal. Call your city or county government’s trash and recycling service (see blue pages in the phone book) to see if your city has such a program. The DEA, working with state and local law enforcement, is sponsoring National Prescription Drug Take Back Days throughout the U.S. For more about this go to <http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov>.
- If disposal instructions are not given on the drug label and no take-back program is available in your area, throw the drugs in the trash, **but first**:
 1. Take them out of their original containers.
 2. Mix them with something like used coffee grounds or kitty litter. The medication will be less appealing to children and pets, and unrecognizable to people who may go through your trash.
 3. Put the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container. This will prevent the medication from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.

Some Additional Tips

- Before throwing out a drug container, scratch out personal information on the label like your name, the drug name, etc. This will help protect your privacy and your health information.
- Do not give medications to friends. A drug that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.
- If you are not sure how to dispose of your meds, talk to your pharmacist.
- The same steps above can also be used to dispose of over-the-counter medication.

The above information is adapted from the April 2011, FDA consumer health article concerning the disposal of unused drugs. The full article, How to Dispose of Unused Medicines, is available at <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm>.

[March 2012]



Prepared for the subscribers of
Pharmacist's Letter / Prescriber's Letter to give to their patients.
Copyright © 2012 by Therapeutic Research Center
www.pharmacistsletter.com ~ www.prescribersletter.com

