Safe Disposal of Controlled Substances

Keeping your family and loved ones safe can start in your own home. Remove any unused or expired medicines that may be in cabinets, drawers, or storage right away.

What are controlled substances?



A controlled substance is a medicine that can lead to addiction or abuse if it is not used as prescribed by your doctor. Controlled substances are regulated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Examples of controlled medicines include opioid medicines used for pain. If these medicines fall into the wrong hands, they can be very unsafe. Safely disposing of these medicines can lower the risk of misuse and abuse.

Why is safe disposal of controlled substances important?

Taking drugs that are not prescribed to you can be very dangerous. By throwing out unused medicines, we can help save lives and keep our loved ones safe.

Where can I safely dispose of my unused medicines?

Removing unused medicines is both safe and easy to do! The best and easiest way to do this is to bring your unused medicines to a DEA drug take-back site. You can also contact sites near you to find a collector in your area:

- Retail pharmacies.
- Waste management.
- Law enforcement.

Helpful links

Find a DEA drug take-back location site near you: **https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/**

Learn more about the DEA's Drug Take Back Program: **https://www.dea.gov/takebackday**

Find a collector in your area: **https://apps.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e2s1**

How can I safely dispose of medicines at home?

If a take-back site is not readily available, there are some safe ways to dispose of medicines in your own home. First, check if the medicine is on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) flush list: **https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-fdas-flush-list-certain-medicines**

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If the medicine IS on the FDA flush list*:

Be sure to flush the medicine down the toilet or sink.

Please note: Flushing some medicines down the drain can be harmful to the environment. Do not flush a medicine unless the medicine is on the FDA flush list or the instructions say to flush it down the drain.

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

If the medicine is NOT on the FDA flush list*:

Take the medicine out of its original container and mix with an undesirable substance - something like used coffee grounds, kitty litter, or dirt. *Do not crush tablets or capsules.

Place the mixture in a sealed plastic bag or container to prevent spills, then throw it in the trash.

Be sure to scratch out all identifying information on the original container. This will protect your personal health information!

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

Please note: You can also reach out to your local pharmacist. Some pharmacies may have mail-back programs in place and other options to help with safe disposal of your unused or expired medicines.

We are here to help

If you have any questions or need assistance with safely disposing of your unused medicines, please contact us at **1-866-533-5490** (**TTY 711**) October 1 – March 31: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., seven days a week. April 1 – September 30: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For more information on methods for safe disposal of drugs, please visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' website: **https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/prevention/safely-dispose-drugs/index.html**

Sources:

1. https://www.dea.gov/drug-information/csa
2. https://drugabusestatistics.org
3. https://apps2.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e2s1
4. www.deatakeback.com
5. https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-drug-take-back-locations
6. https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/where-and-how-dispose-unused-medicines

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