



Safe Disposal of Unused Medicines

What should you do with medications that have not been used, expired and out of date? When your medicine is no longer needed, [it's important to dispose of them properly to avoid harm to others](#). Safe disposal greatly reduces the chance that others may accidentally or intentionally take the medicine that was not prescribed for them such as [opioid medicines](#). Medicine disposal through take-back programs is a good way to remove expired, unwanted, or unused medicines from the home and reduce the chance that others may accidentally take the medicine.

Keep these handy medicine disposal tips and refer to them as needed:

- Follow disposal directions you received with your medicines. If you did not receive directions, ask your pharmacist about disposal or consult the [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) guidelines](#) and [FDA Drug Disposal Questions & Answers](#).
- Take advantage of programs that accept unused medications for proper disposal. Find the disposal location in your area by visiting [AgainstOpioidAbuse.org/disposal](#).
- Visit the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's website for information on the [National Prescription Drug Take Back Events](#).
- The FDA recommends folding fentanyl patches in half with the sticky sides together before flushing.
- Ask your physician's office or pharmacist if they provide medication disposal bags (these bags neutralize medicines to avoid damage to the environment).
- If you cannot get to a drug take back location promptly, or there is none near you, **and** your medicine is:
 - on the FDA [flush list](#), your next best option is to [immediately flush these potentially dangerous medicines down the toilet](#).
 - **not** on the [flush list](#), you should follow these [instructions to discard the medicine in your trash at home](#).*
- As long as local laws and ordinances allow for medicines to be legally disposed of in household trash, medicines can be mixed, NOT crushed with dirt, kitty litter or used coffee grounds and place the mixture in a sealed plastic bag before discarding in the trash.*
- Before throwing out a medicine container, such as a pill bottle, remember to scratch out all personal information on the prescription label to make it unreadable.
- Loose needles or other sharp objects should not be disposed of in household or public trash cans or recycling bins. Sharp objects should never be flushed down the toilet. This practice puts trash and sewage workers, janitors, housekeepers, household members, and children at risk of being harmed. Sharps should always be disposed of in a sharps container. Visit [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](#) to locate a disposal site near you.

***Note:** Flushing medication in the toilet or throwing it in the trash are known to create environmental risks and public health concerns. Therefore, it is preferable to dispose of your medications in the medication disposal bags at proper disposal locations as noted in the checklist above.

