

Safe Disposal of Your Prescription Medications

Unused medications should be disposed of as soon as possible to limit the possibility of illegal use. Never share narcotic medication or store unused narcotic medication in anticipation of future use as they may be stolen or abused by others.

Please do not flush or dump unused medications down a drain. Sewage treatment systems can't remove all the medications from the water released into lakes, rivers, or oceans.*

Drug Take-Back Programs

Drug take-back programs allow you to bring any expired or unused drugs to a central location such as the local police station and/or pharmacy for proper disposal. Visit the [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) (DEA) or [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) websites for more information.

Household Disposal

If no instructions are given on the drug label and no take-back programs are available in your area, almost all medicines can be thrown into your household trash. These include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs in pills, liquids, drops, patches, creams, and inhalers.

Follow these steps:

- Remove the drugs from their original containers and mix them with something undesirable, such as used coffee grounds, dirt, or cat litter.
- Put the mixture in something you can close (a re-sealable zipper storage bag, empty can, or other container) to prevent the drug from leaking or spilling out.
- Throw the container in the garbage.
- Scratch out all of your personal information on the empty medicine packaging to protect your identity and privacy.
- Throw the packaging away.
- If you have a question about your medication, ask your health care provider or pharmacist.

**United States Geological Survey. (2014). Pharmaceuticals, hormones, and other organic wastewater contaminants in U.S. streams. Retrieved from <http://toxics.usgs.gov/pubs/FS-027-02/pdf/FS-027-02.pdf>*