

# Proper Disposal Of Prescription Drugs



- Unused or expired prescription medications in the home place children, pets, and other individuals at risk for accidental or intentional drug misuse.
- Drug take back options are the best way to safely dispose of unused or expired prescription medications.
- People may use drug deactivation kits to remove unused or expired prescription medications from their homes.
- Individuals can also dispose of prescription medications in their household trash by *following FDA instructions*.

## The Risks Of Unused Or Expired Prescription Drugs

Unused or expired prescription drugs can possibly lead to many things:

- **RISK**—if taken by someone they weren't prescribed for
- **HARM**—if accidentally taken by a child or pet
- **DANGER**—or even death, if not used as directed

Unused or expired medications can be found in homes across the country—in bathrooms, kitchens, bedrooms, purses, and anywhere people store medicines. Individuals can reduce the risk to family, friends, and others by safely disposing of unused or expired prescription drugs before they can cause harm.

## How To Safely Dispose Of Unused Or Expired Prescription Drugs

People can dispose of unused or expired prescription drugs using the following methods:

- Drop off the medications at a drug take back event or collection site
- Dispose of the medications using a drug deactivation kit
- Place the medications in the household trash *in accordance with FDA instructions*

Information on each option is available below.

### Drop Off The Medications At A Drug Take Back Event Or Collection Site

Drug take back options are the best way to safely dispose of unused or expired prescription medications.

Before disposing of prescription drugs, individuals should remove all personal information on pill bottle labels and medication packaging. All of the medicines dropped off at the take back location will be destroyed.

There are two types of drug take back options:

- **Periodic take back events:** The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) periodically hosts National Prescription Drug Take Back events. During these Drug Take Back Days, temporary drug collection sites are set up in communities nationwide for safe disposal of prescription drugs. Local law enforcement agencies also sponsor medicine take back events in their communities.
- **Permanent collection sites:** The collection sites safely and securely gather and dispose of unused or expired prescription drugs, including those that contain controlled substances. Authorized collection sites in communities include law enforcement agencies and other facilities, including retail, hospital, or clinic pharmacies. Some collection sites may offer on-site medicine drop boxes; mail back programs; or other in-home disposal methods to assist people in safely disposing of their unused or expired medicines.



Wheeler

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A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Items that can be discarded in medication drop boxes include:

- Prescription medications
- Medication samples
- Medicated lotions and ointments
- Over-the-counter medications
- Medications for household pets

Items that cannot be discarded in medication drop boxes include:

- Needles or other “sharps”
- Personal care products
- Hazardous waste
- Thermometers

A person should never throw away needles or other “sharps” loosely into the trash or toilet. They can dispose of them in a strong, plastic container. When the container is 3/4 full, the individual can put the lid on, seal it with duct tape, and label the container: DO NOT RECYCLE. They should place the container in the household trash bin—not the recycle bin.

#### **Dispose Of The Medications Using A Drug Deactivation Kit**

An individual can safely dispose of unused or expired prescription medications using a drug deactivation kit. The kit includes a bag that contains a carbon, which bonds to the pharmaceutical compounds within the medication when water is added. A person simply puts their medication in the bag, adds water, and shakes the bag to neutralize the active ingredient in the medication. An individual can then place the bag in the household trash for safe removal from their home.

#### **Place In The Household Trash In Accordance With FDA Instructions**

If no drug take back events or collection sites are available in the area, and there are no specific disposal instructions in the medication guide or package insert, individuals can follow these simple steps to dispose of medicines in their trash at home:

- Mix medications (liquid or pills; do not crush tablets or capsules) with an unappealing substance such as dirt, cat litter, or used coffee grounds
- Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag
- Throw away the container in the trash at home
- Delete all personal information on the prescription label of empty medicine bottles or medicine packaging, then throw away or recycle the empty bottle or packaging

Medications should never be flushed down the sink or toilet. Flushed medications make their way into lakes, rivers, and streams. Research has shown continuous exposure to low levels of medications has altered the behavior and physiology of fish and other aquatic organisms. The FDA is working with other agencies to better understand the human health and ecological risks of flushing medications into water systems.

## **Connecticut Resources**

**CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
[www.ct.gov/DMHAS](http://www.ct.gov/DMHAS)

**CT Department of Consumer Protection—Medication Drop Box Locations**  
[www.ct.gov/DCP](http://www.ct.gov/DCP)

**Drug Free CT**  
[www.drugfreect.org](http://www.drugfreect.org)

**24/7 Access Line**  
1.800.563.4086

## **National Resource**

**U. S. Food & Drug Administration**  
[www.fda.gov/drugdisposal](http://www.fda.gov/drugdisposal)

