

Safe Disposal of Unused or Expired Medications

Properly disposing of unused or expired medications, especially controlled substances, helps prevent misuse, protects children and pets, and keeps medications out of our water systems.

Best Options for Safe Disposal

1. Medication Take-Back Locations

The safest and preferred method is to use a secure medication drop box.

You can typically find these at:

- Local pharmacies (many major chains participate)
- Police departments or sheriff's offices
- Hospitals or clinics with disposal programs

These locations safely handle all medications, including controlled substances.

2. DEA National Prescription Drug Take Back Day

The DEA National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is held twice per year across the United States.

- Free and anonymous
- Accepts controlled substances
- Widely available in most communities

You can search for local collection sites at: takebackday.dea.gov

3. Mail-Back Programs

Some pharmacies and healthcare providers offer prepaid mail-back envelopes.

- Place medications in a secure envelope
- Mail to an authorized disposal facility
- Safe for controlled substances when using approved programs

4. At-Home Disposal (If No Other Option Available)

If a take-back option is not accessible, you can dispose of most medications at home:

Steps:

1. Remove medications from original containers
2. Mix with an undesirable substance (e.g., coffee grounds or cat litter)
3. Place in a sealed bag or container
4. Throw in household trash

Important:

- Scratch out personal information on prescription labels
- Do NOT crush tablets or capsules

Special Instructions for Controlled Substances

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- Controlled medications (e.g., opioids, stimulants, benzodiazepines) should **always** be taken to a take-back location when possible
- Some high-risk medications are on the FDA “flush list” and may be flushed if no other option is available—ask your pharmacist or provider if unsure

What NOT to Do

- Do not flush medications unless specifically instructed
- Do not leave medications accessible in your home
- Do not share medications with others

Need Help Finding a Location?

You can:

- Ask your pharmacist
- Contact your local police department
- Use the DEA locator tool: takebackday.dea.gov

Our Commitment to Safety

We encourage safe medication use and disposal as part of responsible care. If you have questions about your medications or how to dispose of them, please contact our team—we’re happy to help.