

Opioids: Safe Storage & Disposal

Why is it Important?

Every year, about two million people in the U.S. go to the hospital because of problems with drugs. These problems can happen from taking the wrong medicine, having a bad reaction, being allergic, or taking too much. To help keep everyone safe, it's important to store medicines and other dangerous items—like over-the-counter drugs, marijuana products, alcohol, and illegal substances—in a safe place. Keeping these things locked up and out of reach can help prevent accidents, especially with kids and teens. Safe storage can make a big difference in keeping your home safe.

How do I Store my Medication Safely?



It's important to keep all your medications safe—especially after surgery. Check to see if any of your prescription medicines are expired. Old medicine might not work the way it should and could even be unsafe. Make sure all your medications—both new and old—are stored in their original bottles or packages, with the safety caps closed tightly.

Some medicines, like opioids or other controlled drugs, can be very dangerous if taken by someone they weren't prescribed for. That's why it's best to keep them in a locked cabinet or box, where others—especially kids, teens, or visitors—can't get to them. Safe storage helps protect you and the people around you from accidents or misuse.

If you're not sure how to store your medicine or what to do with old pills, ask your nurse, doctor, or pharmacist. They can help you keep your home safe.

How do I Dispose of my Medication Safely?

After surgery, you may have leftover or expired prescription medicine. It's important to get rid of these medicines safely and quickly. Keeping old or unused medicine at home can be risky—someone might take it by accident or on purpose, and that could be dangerous.

The best way to get rid of medicine is through a drug take-back program. These programs are safe and good for the environment. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has special days when you can drop off medicine in your community, and some pharmacies or hospitals have permanent drop-off boxes.

If there isn't a drop-off site near you, there are ways to throw away medicine safely at home:

1. Check the label on your medicine bottle. Some medicines have special instructions for how to get rid of them.
2. If there are no special instructions, see if your medicine is on the FDA "flush list". If it is, you can flush it down the toilet right away.
3. If your medicine is not on the flush list, you can throw it in the trash by following these steps:
 - Mix the medicine with something like dirt, cat litter, or used coffee grounds.
 - Put the mixture in a sealed plastic bag or container.
 - Throw the container in your regular trash.
 - Scratch out your name and other personal information on the medicine bottle before recycling or throwing it away.

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Safe disposal helps protect your family, pets, and the environment. If you're not sure what to do, ask your nurse, provider, or pharmacist for help.

SCAN TO ACCESS
THE FDA FLUSH
LIST



SCAN TO FIND
A DEA TAKE-BACK
SITE



SCAN TO GIVE US
FEEDBACK ON THIS
RESOURCE

