

## Drug Disposal Guidelines and Locations

The following guidelines were developed to encourage the proper disposal of medicines and help reduce harm from accidental exposure or intentional misuse after they are no longer needed:

Follow any specific disposal instructions on the prescription drug labeling or patient information that accompanies the medicine. Do not flush medicines down the sink or toilet unless this information specifically instructs you to do so.

Take advantage of programs that allow the public to take unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. Call your local law enforcement agencies to see if they sponsor medicine take-back programs in your community. Contact your city's or county government's household trash and recycling service to learn about medication disposal options and guidelines for your area.

Transfer unused medicines to collectors registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Authorized sites may be retail, hospital or clinic pharmacies, and law enforcement locations. Some offer mail-back programs or collection receptacles ("drop-boxes"). Visit the [DEA's website](#) or call 1-800-882-9539 for more information and to find an [authorized collector](#) in your community.

If no disposal instructions are given on the prescription drug labeling and no take-back program is available in your area, throw the drugs in the household trash following these steps:

Remove them from their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds, dirt or kitty litter (this makes the drug less appealing to children and pets, and unrecognizable to people who may intentionally go through the trash seeking drugs).

Place the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can or other container to prevent the drug from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.

FDA's Ilisa Bernstein, Pharm.D., J.D., offers a few more tips:

Scratch out all identifying information on the prescription label to make it unreadable. This will help protect your identity and the privacy of your personal health information.

Do not give your medicine to friends. Doctors prescribe medicines based on your specific symptoms and medical history. Something that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.

When in doubt about proper disposal, ask your pharmacist.

Bernstein says the same disposal methods for prescription drugs could apply to over-the-counter drugs as well