

HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNWANTED AND EXPIRED MEDICATION

It is important to remove all used or expired medications and sharps from your home. Doing so helps prevent misuse or accidental ingestion by children or pets. Proper disposal also helps protect the soil and groundwater from contamination.

You should always read your medication's packaging or the provided patient information and follow any provided disposal instructions.

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TAKE-BACK PROGRAMS¹

Medication take-back programs are the preferred and safest method of medication disposal. To find a program near you, contact your local law enforcement agency or waste management authority.

 *The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) hosts two National Take Back Days a year — on the 4th Saturday of both April and October.*

If there is not a take-back program available, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends flushing or throwing away most medications.

FLUSHING²

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) deems certain medications as too harmful, and potentially, fatal if used in ways other than they were prescribed for. If a medication take-back program is unavailable, these medications should be immediately flushed. Only medications that are on the FDA's flush list should be flushed — all other medications should be discarded in the trash in the absence of a medication take back program.

 *These medications can be found on the FDA's Flush List:*

<https://www.fda.gov/media/109643/download>

To flush medications, empty the entire contents of the medication container into the toilet bowl and flush.

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Scratch out or remove all identifying information on the prescription label before throwing it in the trash.

TRASH³

If your medication is not on the FDA's Flush List and a medication take-back program is unavailable, you may throw the medication away in the trash.

 *Always check with local trash services to make sure medications can legally be thrown away in your area.*

Remove all medications from their original containers.

Place the mixture in a container, such as a butter tub or coffee can; or a sealable plastic bag.

Scratch out or remove all identifying information on the prescription label before throwing it in the trash.

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Mix the medications with an undesirable substance such as cat litter, used coffee grounds, or dirt. When mixed, medications are less appealing and become unrecognizable to people who may go through your trash.

Discard the container or sealed bag containing the mixture in your household trash.

 *For more information on how to properly dispose of medications, visit www.noblehealthservices.com/rxdisposal*

SHARPS DISPOSAL⁴

Sharps have different disposal requirements than medications.

To safely dispose of sharps:

 *It is recommended that you use an FDA-cleared sharps container. If an FDA-cleared container is not available, you can use a heavy-duty plastic household container (i.e. laundry detergent bottle) instead.*

Immediately place used sharps and empty vials in your sharps container after use.

Select states allow residents to discard sharps containers with their household trash. Other options available in your community may include: drop box or supervised collection sites, household hazardous waste collection sites, local public household hazardous waste collection sites, mail-back programs, and residential special waste pick-up services.

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Once your sharps container is 3/4 full, seal it with duct tape. If you are using a household container, be sure to label it properly with "DO NOT RECYCLE."

 *If you are still unsure of how to dispose of a medication, syringe, sharp, or sharps container, ask your pharmacist.*



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SOURCES:

1. Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know." *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*, FDA, www.fda.gov/drugs/safe-disposal-medicines/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know.
2. Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "Drug Disposal: Flush Potentially Dangerous Medicines." *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*, FDA, www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-flush-potentially-dangerous-medicine.
3. Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "Drug Disposal: Dispose 'Non-Flush List' Medicine in Trash." *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*, FDA, www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-dispose-non-flush-list-medicine-trash.
4. Center for Devices and Radiological Health. "Best Way to Get Rid of Used Needles and Other Sharps." *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*, FDA, www.fda.gov/medical-devices/safely-using-sharps-needles-and-syringes-home-work-and-travel/best-way-get-rid-used-needles-and-other-sharps.