



Medication Disposal Guide

Is your medicine cabinet filled with expired drugs or medications you no longer use? How should you dispose of them?

A growing number of “take-back” programs offer the best way to dispose of your medications. Otherwise, most drugs can be thrown in the trash, but you should take certain precautions before tossing them out. A few drugs should only be flushed down the toilet.

Summary of the Federal Guidelines for Drug Disposal

- **Follow disposal instructions** on the drug label or patient information that comes with your medication. Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet unless this information tells you to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you are unsure.
- If available in your area, use a **drug take-back program** that allows you to bring unused drugs to a central location for disposal. Call your city or county government’s trash and recycling service (see blue pages in the phone book) to see if your city has such a program. Your pharmacy may also have a drug take-back program. To find a pharmacy that can take back medications call 800-882-9539.
- If disposal instructions are not given on the drug label and no take-back program is available in your area, throw the drugs in the trash, **but first**:
 1. Take them out of their original containers.
 2. Mix them with something like used coffee grounds or kitty litter. The medication will be less appealing to children and pets, and unrecognizable to people who may go through your trash.
 3. Put the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container. This will prevent the medication from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.
 4. For inhalers and aerosol products, follow the handling and disposal instructions on the patient information sheet. These items could be dangerous if punctured or thrown into a fire or incinerator.

Some Additional Tips

- Before throwing out a drug container, scratch out personal information on the label like your name, the drug name, etc. This will help protect your privacy and your health information.
- Do not give medications to friends. A drug that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.
- If you are not sure how to dispose of your meds, talk to your pharmacist.
- The same steps above can also be used to dispose of over-the-counter medication.