



MICHIGAN MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Medication Disposal

How Do I Dispose of Unused Medications?

Why should I properly dispose of my old medication?

Poisoning due to a drug overdose is a leading cause of injury and death for people of all ages. It is important to remove expired, unwanted, or unused medicines from the home as quickly as possible to help reduce the chance that others may accidentally take or intentionally misuse the unneeded medicine. Some medications, such as opioid pain medications (narcotics) can cause great harm, and even death, if they are not used as prescribed. Opioids are a class of medications to treat pain, for example: morphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, fentanyl and others.



Around
46
PEOPLE

die every day from overdoses involving **prescription opioids.**

The Michigan Department of Environment Quality does not recommend flushing unwanted medications down the drain or toilet. Flushing them down the drain or toilet can pollute our water and harm animals and people. Disposal in the trash may create an opportunity for illegal use or accidental poisoning. It is important to dispose of old medications **properly**.

How do I properly dispose of old medications?

The safest way to dispose of old medications is to take them to an authorized “Take-Back” program in your area. A Take-Back program is a place that is authorized to receive unused medications. Some communities have Take-Back events, where people can bring back unused medications to a specific location on a specific day and time.

Unused medications include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs and supplements in pills, liquids, drops, patches, creams, and inhalers. Please call and check with each location before taking back medications as many programs have different rules as to what type of medications they take-back.

Where can I find a Take-Back Program?

Many local police departments, pharmacies, and Michigan State Police posts will take-back unwanted medications (including opioids and other controlled substances), without asking questions. Call your local county health departments for information about Take-Back programs in your area.

Finding Take-Back locations on the Internet:

- To find Take-Back programs or events in Michigan visit: <http://michigan-open.org/takebackmap/> or <http://www.michigan.gov/deqdrugdisposal>
- For locations outside of Michigan visit AwareRxE website to access an online Drug Disposal Locator Tool
<https://nabp.pharmacy/initiatives/awarxe/drug-disposal-locator/>

Mail-in Take-Back Programs

Another option to dispose of un-used medications is to purchase postage prepaid envelopes. After filling the envelope with unused medications you can drop it off in the mail. Google “Takeaway Medication Recovery System Envelopes” to find a retailer for these envelopes.

What can I do with old medications if a Take-Back program is not available to me?

Check to see if the label has specific disposal instructions. If not, follow these simple steps to dispose of most medicines in the household trash.

1. **Mix** medicine (do not crush tablets or capsules) with a bad-tasting substance such as dirt, kitty litter or used coffee grounds
2. **Place** the mixture in a sealed bag or container
3. **Throw** the sealed mixture in household trash

4. **Scratch** out all personal information on the prescription label and dispose of the medicine container. Recycle or trash the empty container.



Where can I learn more?

- Department of Environmental Quality Drug Disposal
<http://www.michigan.gov/deqdrugdisposal>
- Safe Drug Disposal on the Michigan Opioid Prescribing Engagement Network
<http://michigan-open.org/safe-drug-disposal/>

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