

How to Safely Dispose of Unused Opioids

Why is the proper disposal of unused opioids important?

- **Accidental poisoning:** Unused opioids, such as hydrocodone, morphine, and oxycodone, are dangerous to have in your home when they are no longer needed or have expired. Children, pets, and visitors in your home can accidentally take unused opioids. In 2109:
 - opioids and non-opioid pain medications caused over 280,000 poisonings
 - over 78,000 of these poisonings occurred in children under 5 years old
 - the poisonings resulted in 475 deaths
- **Expired medicine:** Expired medications may no longer be effective.
- **Drug diversion:** Drug diversion occurs when medication is used by someone other than the person it was prescribed for. Opioids are at a great risk of being used by others for personal use, sale, or distribution.

What is the safest way to dispose of unused opioids?

- The safest way to dispose of unused opioids is to take them to an authorized drug disposal site:
 - Roswell Park has a drug disposal container. It is located on the 1st floor of the main hospital just past the ATM machine.
 - Call your pharmacy and ask if they have a take back box for unwanted or expired medications.
 - You can search any of the following websites for a drug disposal location closest to you:
 - New York *Take Back* programs for household drugs. Go to the NY Department of Conservation website www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/67720.html Click on "Find a free collection site near you"
 - DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) <https://apps2.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s1>
 - National Association of Boards of Pharmacy <https://safe.pharmacy/drug-disposal/>

How do I know if I can throw away or flush other unused medications?

- **Flushing:** Check the label on your medication or the FDA [Flush List](https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-fdas-flush-list-certain-medicines#FlushList) to see if flushing your medication is appropriate. **DO NOT** flush medications not on flush list. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-fdas-flush-list-certain-medicines#FlushList>

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- **Garbage:** Throwing away medications is appropriate **ONLY** if drug take back program is unavailable **AND** the medication is not on “flush list”.
- Follow these steps to dispose of unused medications at home.
 1. Remove personal information on original container.
 2. Remove medication from original container and place whole pills in plastic bag or empty can that is sealable or has a lid.
 3. Mix medication with dirt, coffee grounds, cat litter, hand sanitizer, or ethyl alcohol. **Do not hide in food.**
 4. Place the mixture in a bag, box, or plastic tub that you can seal. Secure the container with strong tape.
 5. Place the sealed container with the mixture and the original container in your trash as close to trash collection day as possible.

If you have any questions regarding disposal of your medication you should call the provider who prescribed the medication or the pharmacy that dispensed the medication.

How can I safely store opioids that I am currently using in my house?

- Don't leave medications out where others can see them.
- Keep them in a locked area, if possible.
- Keep out of reach of children and pets.
- Avoid placing opioid medications in a pill box.
- Keep in the original, labeled container.
- If you need help taking your medication, designate only 1 or 2 people to handle your opioids.