

How Proper Disposal of Medicines Protects You and the Earth:

- Prevents poisoning of children and pets
- Deters misuse by teenagers and adults
- Avoids health problems from accidentally taking the wrong medicine, too much of the same medicine, or a medicine that is too old to work well
- Keeps medicines from entering streams and rivers when poured down the drain or flushed down the toilet

How Improper Disposal of Medicines May End Up in Our Drinking Water Sources:

In homes that use septic tanks, prescription and over-the-counter drugs flushed down the toilet can leak into the ground and seep into ground water. In cities and towns where residences are connected to wastewater treatment plants, prescription and over-the-counter drugs poured down the sink or flushed down the toilet can pass through the treatment system and enter rivers and lakes. They may flow downstream to serve as sources for community drinking water supplies. Water treatment plants are generally not equipped to routinely remove medicines.

**According to the EPA*

UNUSED OR EXPIRED PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS ARE A PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUE, LEADING TO POTENTIAL ACCIDENTAL POISONING, MISUSE, AND OVERDOSE. PROPER DISPOSAL OF UNUSED DRUGS SAVES LIVES AND PROTECTS THE ENVIRONMENT

You must not share your prescription drugs—they were prescribed to you!!

For more information on preventing prescription drug misuse, go to the following websites:

- www.dea.gov
- www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com
- www.justthinktwice.com
- www.campusdrugprevention.gov
- National Alcohol/Substance Abuse Hotline 1-800-784-6776



**NEW MEXICO
OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL
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Prescription Drug Disposal Guide



Safeguard Against Medicine Abuse: Securing and Disposing Medications

Step 1: Monitor

Parents are in an influential position to immediately help reduce teen access to prescription medicine because medicine is commonly found in the home. But how aware are you of the quantities that are currently in your home?

Think about this: Would you know if some of your pills were missing? From this day forward, make sure you can honestly answer yes. Start by taking note of how many pills are in each of your prescription bottles or pill packets, and keep track of refills. This goes for your own medicine, as well as for your teens and other members of the household. If you find you need to refill your medicine more often than expected, that could indicate a problem.

If your teen has been prescribed a medicine, be sure you control the medicine, and monitor dosages and refills. You need to be especially vigilant with medicines that are known to be addictive and commonly abused by teens, such as opioids, benzodiazepines and stimulants. Make sure your friends, parents of your teen's friends, neighbors and relatives — especially grandparents — are also aware of the risks. Encourage them to regularly monitor their own medicines in their own homes .



Step 2: Secure

Approach securing your prescriptions the same way you would other valuables in your home, like jewelry or cash. There's no shame in helping protect those items, and the same holds true for your medicine.

Take prescription medicine out of the medicine cabinet and secure them in a place only you know about. As mentioned previously, if your teen has been prescribed a medicine, be sure you control the medicine and monitor dosages.

If possible, keep all medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter, in a safe place, such as a locked cabinet your teen cannot access. Spread the word to other households that teens may have access to, and encourage them to secure their prescriptions as well.

How to properly dispose of your unused medicines

Step 3: Dispose

Safely disposing of expired or unused medicine is a critical step in helping to protect your teens, your family and home, and decrease the opportunity for your teens or their friends to abuse your medicine.

Disposing medicines in household trash:

Almost all medicines can be thrown into your household trash. These include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs in pills, liquids, drops, patches, creams, and inhalers. Follow these steps:

Remove the drugs from their original containers and mix them with something undesirable, such as used coffee grounds, dirt, or cat litter. This makes the medicine less appealing to children and pets and unrecognizable to someone who might intentionally go through the trash looking for drugs.

Put the mixture in something you can close (a re-sealable zipper storage bag, empty can, or other container) to prevent the drug from leaking or spilling out.

Throw the container in the garbage.

Scratch out all your personal information on the empty medicine packaging to protect your identity and privacy. Throw the packaging away.

If you have a question about your medicine, ask your health care provider or pharmacist.

Additional Tips

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

