

Proper Disposal of Unwanted Medicine

what's the problem?

Unwanted and expired medicine may be a risk to human health and the environment if disposed of improperly. Consumers and caregivers should remove expired, unwanted, or unused medicine to help reduce the chance that others may accidentally take or intentionally misuse it.

DO NOT FLUSH OR POUR DOWN THE DRAIN

This method of disposal is now discouraged.

Keeping prescription and over-the-counter medicines out of the environment prevents pollution. If flushed or poured down a drain, many medicines pass through sewer and septic systems. Because these systems cannot always treat or remove the medicines, they may end up in streams, lakes, and groundwater.

This can cause adverse effects in fish and other aquatic wildlife as well as unintentional human exposure to chemicals in the medications.

take-back programs

Don't flush. Don't pour it down the drain.

When possible, take advantage of the following organizations and businesses that allow residents to bring unwanted and expired medicine to a central location for safe and proper disposal.

- **Several national pharmacies** (e.g., Walgreens, CVS) **offer collection programs at retail locations.** Check the pharmacy website to find a participating location near you.
- **Dispose My Meds** provides information on medication disposal programs offered at independent pharmacies. Visit disposemy meds.org to find a participating pharmacy near you.
- **The Biannual Prescription Drug Take-Back Days** are typically held in April and October each year. Visit DEAtakeback.com for a collection site near you.
- **Many sheriff's departments have year-round collection sites available.** Call your local department to learn what options may be available in your community.

If a take-back program is not available in your community, follow the disposal directions outlined on the next page.

reduce unwanted medicines

- Buy only what you need.
- Centralize all medications in one location in your home. This will limit purchasing products you already have.
- Say no to samples that you won't use.

REMINDER: All medicine should be kept secure and out of reach of children and animals.



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be safe with needles

Many people have medical conditions that require injections at home. These needles, syringes, and lancets (or “sharps”) must be disposed of properly. This ensures that other people, especially sanitation workers, will not be “stuck” or cut.

“Get the Point” promotes a safe and easy way to dispose of sharps. Home-generated sharps should be placed in an empty bleach or detergent bottle and labeled with a warning sticker from S.C. Department of Environmental Services.

step-by-step disposal

- **STEP 1:** Put a warning sticker on an empty bleach or detergent bottle.
- **STEP 2:** Place used needles or lancets in the bottle.
- **STEP 3:** Put the cap on the bottle.
- **STEP 4:** When the bottle is three-fourths full, secure the cap and throw the bottle into the trash. Do not place in the recycling bin.

For more information and to download a copy of the warning sticker, visit des.sc.gov/getthepoint.

For free stickers and additional information, call 1-800-285-5257 or email infectiouswaste@des.sc.gov with your name, address, and number of stickers requested.



here's what to do at home ...

Remember, **don't flush or pour down the drain.**

Dispose of unwanted medicine in your household trash by following the steps below to protect human health and the environment.

- 1 Remove medicine from its original container.**
- 2 Mix medicine with an undesirable substance** (e.g., dirt, cat litter, used coffee grounds). This will help discourage anyone from taking it.
- 3 Place the mixture in a sealable container** (e.g., ziplock bag, container with lid) to prevent leakage.
- 4 Discard the container in your household trash.** Do not place in the recycling bin.
- 5 Scratch out all personal information on the original container to protect your identity.** Discard the packaging in your household trash or check with your pharmacy for recycling options.

additional resources

- AwareRX, safe.pharmacy/drug-disposal
- CVS Pharmacy's Safer Communities, cvs.com/content/safer-communities-locate
- U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's Take Back Day, DEAtakeback.com
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Disposal Guidance, fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/where-and-how-dispose-unused-medicines
- Walgreens Pharmacy's Safe Medication Disposal, walgreens.com/topic/pharmacy/safe-medication-disposal.jsp