



# How to Get Rid of Medicines

You might take prescription or over-the-counter medicines to help manage your health. But there may come a time when you no longer need to take these medicines or they have expired. An expired medicine is past its “use by” or “discard by” date. Medicine that has expired may not work as well and may no longer be safe to use. So don’t use or keep medicine that has expired or that you don’t need.

It’s important to get rid of old or unwanted medicines. This can help prevent other people or animals from using medicines that aren’t meant for them. A medicine can be helpful to the person it was prescribed for. But it can cause serious problems if it’s used by someone else or an animal.

## How do you get rid of medicines?

Check the label on the medicine bottle or box or the information that came with your medicine. It may tell you how to get rid of the medicine safely. If it doesn’t, there are a few ways you can get rid of the medicines. If you have any questions about how to get rid of medicines, ask a pharmacist for help.

Bring them to a medicine take-back program or drop-off box

Find out if your local trash and recycle center, pharmacy, or hospital offers a medicine take-back program or a place to drop off medicine. These are two of the best ways to safely throw away medicines.

## THROW THEM IN THE TRASH

If there isn’t a take-back program or drop-off box near you, follow these steps to throw away medicine with the rest of your garbage:

- Take the medicine out of the container it came in. You can throw that container away. But first scratch out any personal information printed on the label. This will help protect your identity and health information.
- Mix the medicine with a substance that doesn’t taste good, such as cat litter, sawdust, or coffee grounds. Don’t crush tablets or capsules.
- Place the mixture in some other container, such as a sealed plastic bag or can.
- Put that container in your household trash.

## FLUSH THEM DOWN THE SINK OR TOILET

Only a few medicines should be flushed down the sink or toilet if you can’t use a take-back program or drop-off box. These medicines include prescription pain medicines, such as oxycodone or morphine.

The FDA says that these kinds of medicines can be more harmful than other medicines if they are taken by someone other than the person they were prescribed for or by an animal. So it's best to flush old or unwanted doses down the sink or toilet right away. When you do this, you take away any chance that a person or an animal might get sick from one of these medicines.

To see a list of medicines that should be flushed down the sink or toilet, go to:  
[www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm).

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