

Medication Disposal: How Do I Dispose Medication at Home?

Why should I properly dispose of my old medication?

Old medications are the number 1 (one) cause of poisonings in children under 5 (five) years of age. Flushing them down the drain or toilet can pollute our water and harm animals and people. It is important to dispose old medications properly using the “Wrap & Trash” method explained below. Improper disposal in the trash may create an opportunity for illegal use or accidental poisoning. The University of Michigan Hospital and Health Systems are not able to take back medications after they are dispensed.

How do I properly dispose old medication?

In a 2012 study, University of Michigan researchers found that disposing medications with the “wrap & trash” method is the least harmful for the environment.

The Wrap & Trash Method:

1. Keep the medicine in its original container and black out, tape over, scratch off, or peel off personal information.



2. Properly package medication for disposal. See below for instructions.
 - a. **Solid medications such as pills or capsules:**
Add enough water to the medicine bottle to partially dissolve the medications. Seal the container with duct or opaque tape.
 - b. **Liquid medications:** Add enough table salt, flour, charcoal, coffee grounds or non-toxic powdered spice, such as mustard, to make a pungent, unsightly mixture that discourages anyone from eating it. Seal the medicine bottle with duct or opaque tape.
 - c. **Blister packs:** Wrap the blister pack in multiple layers of duct or other opaque tape.
 - d. **Ampules, vials, and IV bags:** Wrap the ampule, vial, or IV bag with duct tape or other opaque to minimize breakage. Place in opaque plastic container (such as an empty yogurt or margarine tub).
 - e. **Inhaled:** Wrap inhaler in duct tape or other opaque tape and place in plastic bag. Tie or tape plastic bag shut.

3. Double-bag the medications in a closable plastic bag, then place the bag in a non-descript container, such as a brown paper bag box or can.



4. Tape the container closed and put it in the trash. This helps prevent immediate identification that the package contains medications and helps contain any leaks if the container breaks during the disposal process. Avoid putting medications into any material or food that might be attractive to pets or wildlife

“Take-Back” Programs

Many communities have Take-Back Programs for medications. Please call and check with each location before taking back medications as many programs have different rules and steps on what they take back.

Where can I find a “Take Back” location near me?

- Visit: <http://umhealth.me/takebackmap> to find a pharmacy, or a police department in your area that have a Take-Back program.
- Visit AwareRxE website to access an online Drug Disposal Locator Tool <http://www.awarerx.pharmacy/dispose-safely/disposal-sites>
- Visit the Michigan Household Drug Take Back Programs Page at: http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,4561,7-135-3312_4118_74618-370212--00.html

Where can I learn more information?

To view a video on “Wrap and Trash” access : <http://www.dontflushdrugs.com> and scroll down the page.

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