



# How to Safely Store and Get Rid of Medicines

## Store your medicines safely.

Here are some tips for safe storage of opioid medicines:

- Keep track of your medicines
- Check expiration dates and get rid of expired medicines
- Lock your medicines in a safe place
- Take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor
- Never share your medicines with others
- Keep your medicines in the original containers, even when traveling

## Unused medicines can harm those in your home and community.

Keeping unused medicines in your home does more than just take up space in your medicine cabinet. Unused medicine can be a danger to children, seniors and pets. Every minute of every day, a poison control center answers a call about a young child that has swallowed a medicine by mistake. Having unused prescription opioids in your home may also contribute to the opioid epidemic. More than 70% of people misusing opioids are getting them from family and friends.

## Flushing or throwing medicines in the trash is not safe.

Many people think that flushing used medicines down the toilet or simply throwing the bottle in the trash are safe ways to get rid of medicines. While this may remove the medicines from your home, it does not remove it from the environment.

## Use local medicine disposal programs.

Here are some ways to safely get rid of opioid medicines:

- Bring them to your local police station
- Search for any community collection events or programs such as “drug take-back days” in your area
- Visit [DisposeMyMeds.org](https://www.disposemy meds.org) for a list of pharmacies in your community that will safely get rid of your unused medicines
- Contact your local waste management authorities to learn about community solid waste programs



If you are unsure of how to dispose of your medicine, contact your pharmacist.

**If you can't use a safe disposal program, follow these steps.**

To safely throw away medicine with your household garbage, follow these steps:

1. Put medicine in a plastic container
2. Mix medicine with coffee grounds, kitty litter or add water and liquid soap
3. Mix and then throw the plastic container in your garbage
4. Scratch out all personal information on the prescription label of your empty pill bottle to make it unreadable, then dispose of the container

**More resources:**

- If you are worried about an accidental poisoning, call the Northern New England Poison Control Center:  
**1-800-222-1222**
- Visit these websites for more information about safe storage and disposal of medications:
  - [UpandAway.org](http://UpandAway.org)
  - [TakeBackYourMeds.org](http://TakeBackYourMeds.org)
  - [DoseofRealityMaine.org](http://DoseofRealityMaine.org)

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