



# Your Medications: Safe Storage & Disposal

## Why is it important to securely store my medications?

► Every year, two million Americans end up in the hospital due to drug-related injuries, including injuries from medication errors, adverse drug reactions, allergic reactions, and overdoses. Safe and secure storage of your medications and other dangerous substances (such as over the counter medications, marijuana products, alcohol, illicit substances) can make a big difference when it comes to avoiding accidental injuries.

## How can I store my medications safely?

- **First, get organized.** Check to see if any of your prescription medicines are expired; old medication may no longer be safe or effective. Make sure your prescription medicine is stored in its original packaging with the safety lock tightened and secured.
- **Second, secure your medicine.** The safe storage of controlled medications is especially important, as they can be dangerous if taken when not prescribed. Make sure your medications are in a locked location, unable to be accessed by others.

## How can I dispose of my medications safely?

- You should dispose of any unused or expired prescription medicine as soon as possible. Timely disposal of prescription medicine can reduce the risk of others taking the medication accidentally or misusing the medication intentionally. ► The best and most environmentally friendly way to dispose of your prescription medicine is through a drug take-back program. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) periodically provides drug disposal sites in communities across the nation. The DEA also has permanent drug disposal sites in certain pharmacies or hospitals.
- Get more information about drug disposal and a disposal site locator at [take back day.dea.gov](https://www.dea.gov/take-back-day).

## What if there are no drug disposal sites in my area?

- If there are no disposal sites in your area, there are ways to safely dispose of your medication at home.
- First, read the packaging label on your medication. Controlled substances and other medicines can be harmful if ingested by others, so the label might have special disposal instructions to follow.
- If there are no special disposal instructions, see if your medication is on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) "flush" list: <https://www.fda.gov/media/109643/download>. If permitted, immediately flush your medicine down the toilet, and scratch out all personal information on the prescription bottle and recycle/throw away.
- If your medication is NOT on the FDA flush list, you can safely dispose of it in your household trash by following these four steps:
  - Mix your medicine with an inedible substance like dirt, cat litter, or used coffee grounds.
  - Put the mixture in a container, such as a sealed plastic bag.
  - Throw the container in your household trash.
  - Scratch out all the personal information on the prescription label of your empty medication bottle to make it unreadable.
  - Then dispose of or recycle the empty medication bottle.

Adapted from [www.cdc.gov/wtc/prescriptionsafety.html](https://www.cdc.gov/wtc/prescriptionsafety.html)