



# Rx Pain Medications

KNOW THE OPTIONS • GET THE FACTS

## Safe Disposal of Prescription Medications



Of the 4 billion prescriptions filled in the United States every year, **one-third of them go unused**. That's 200 million pounds of unused medications.<sup>1</sup>

**Unused medications should be disposed of as soon as possible to limit the possibility of illegal use.**



**Flushing or dumping down a drain is not the best way to dispose of medication.** Sewage treatment systems can't remove all the medications from the water released into lakes, rivers, or oceans in your area.<sup>2</sup>

### So what are the other options?

#### Medication "Take-Back" Programs

"Take-back" programs allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. Call your local government's trash and recycling service to see if a program is available.

In addition:

- The DEA allows you to mail back unused prescription medications to pharmacies and other authorized sites using packages made available at pharmacies and other locations.
- Most states have agency collection boxes overseen by law enforcement or pharmacies. Call the DEA's Registration Call Center to find box locations or other disposal sites: 1-800-882-9539, or go to <https://nabp.pharmacy/initiatives/awarxe/drug-disposal-locator/> or <https://www.deatakeback.com/>
- Community coalitions and law enforcement in your area may sponsor "medication take-back events" periodically.

#### Disposal in Household Trash

If these programs are not available in your area, place the drugs in the trash by following these steps:

- Remove them from their original containers and conceal or remove any personal information, including the Rx number, from the container.
- Mix the medications with something inedible, such as coffee grounds or kitty litter.
- Place the empty container and the mixture in a sealed bag or empty can.

For more information, go to <https://www.epa.gov/research>, <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou/consumers/buyingusingmedicinesafely/ensuringsafeuseofmedicine/safedisposalofmedicines/default.htm> or <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/prevention/safely-dispose-drugs/index.html>.



<sup>1</sup> Dispose My Meds. (n.d.). You and the environment. Retrieved from <http://disposemymeds.org/environmental-impact/>  
<sup>2</sup> United States Geological Survey. (2014). Pharmaceuticals, hormones, and other organic wastewater contaminants in U.S. streams. Retrieved from