



DRUG DISPOSAL GUIDELINES

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy developed [federal guidelines](#) that are summarized here:

1. Follow any specific disposal instructions on the prescription drug labeling or patient information that accompanies the medicine. Do not flush medicines down the sink or toilet unless this information specifically instructs you to do so.
2. Take advantage of community drug take-back programs that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. Call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service (see blue pages in phone book) to see if a take-back program is available in your community. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, working with state and local law enforcement agencies, periodically sponsors [National Prescription Drug Take-Back Days](#).
3. If no disposal instructions are given on the prescription drug labeling and no take-back program is available in your area, throw the drugs in the household trash following these steps.
 1. Remove them from their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter (this makes the drug less appealing to children and pets, and unrecognizable to people who may intentionally go through the trash seeking drugs).
 2. Place the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container to prevent the drug from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.

Ilisa Bernstein, Pharm.D., J.D., FDA's Deputy Director of the Office of Compliance, offers some additional tips:

1. Before throwing out a medicine container, scratch out all identifying information on the prescription label to make it unreadable. This will help protect your identity and the privacy of your personal health information.
2. Do not give your medicine to friends. Doctors prescribe medicines based on a person's specific symptoms and medical history. A medicine that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.
3. When in doubt about proper disposal, talk to your pharmacist.

Bernstein says the same disposal methods for prescription drugs could apply to over-the-counter drugs as well.

For the most current guidelines for drug disposal, please visit the FDA website at <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm>.