



Are You **AWARE**?

Proper Disposal of Unused Medications Helps Prevent Misuse and Abuse

Safely Disposing of Unused Prescription Drugs

Prevent accidental or intentional misuse of unwanted medications by disposing of them properly. There are generally two options for patients to safely and legally dispose of unwanted, expired, or unneeded medications:

1. Take unwanted medications to a local drug disposal site or take-back event:

- Find drug disposal sites in your area by using the online Locator Tool on the Drug Disposal Sites web page of www.AWARERX.ORG.
- Check with local law-enforcement locations for information about medication take-back events.

2. Follow local or Food and Drug Administration guidelines for home disposal, in summary:

- Check the label and follow any instructions for safe disposal provided.
- Do not flush the drugs down the toilet, unless the label says to flush them.
- If there are no instructions on the label, take the medication out of the container and mix with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or cat litter. Seal the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container that can be disposed of in the home garbage. Be sure to scratch out all identifying information on the prescription label before throwing away the container.



Safe Syringe, Sharps, and Lancet Disposal

Safely managing and disposing of household generated sharps reduces pollution to the environment and prevents injury and disease transmission from needle-sticks. Similar to prescription drugs, many states have options available for safe sharps disposal such as drop boxes, hazardous waste sites, mail-back programs, and syringe exchange programs.



If there are no other disposal methods available, needles may be safely disposed at home:

- Place used sharps in an empty household container such as a laundry detergent bottle, bleach bottle, or other opaque sturdy container with a screw-top lid.
- Insert the needles point-first, mark the bottle "Do Not Recycle," and store with the cap screwed on.
- When the container is half-full, seal the cap with duct tape and place in the garbage (not recycling). Never place loose needles, syringes, or lancets in the trash.

Due to the injury and health risks it places on garbage facility workers, disposing of needles in the trash is the least desirable method. Although placing sharps in the regular trash may be allowable under state rule, some municipalities prohibit this disposal method or require special notification and instructions. Please check with your local government first.

In California, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Wisconsin it is illegal to dispose of needles in the trash.



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