



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Getting Rid of Unused Medications

This information explains how to get rid of your unused medications.

How to Get Rid of Unused Medications

Most unused medications can't be flushed down the toilet or drain. They damage our water supply and can harm wildlife.

The best way to get rid of unused medications is to bring them to a scheduled drug take-back event. You can find out about drug take-back events from:

- Your local pharmacy
- Your local recycling coordinator
- Your city or town
- The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) website (takebackday.dea.gov)

Controlled substances

Not all drug take-back events are allowed to collect controlled substances (such as oxycodone hydrochloride (OxyContin®)). Controlled substances are addictive and can be abused. For this reason, they must be treated differently than other prescription medications.

The best way to get rid of your unused controlled substances is to bring them to a controlled substance public disposal location. To find one, search the DEA Diversion Control Division website (bit.ly/2TGic86) or call 800-882-9539.

If there are no scheduled drug take-back events or controlled substance public disposal locations in your area, or if you want to dispose of your medications as soon as possible, follow the steps below.

1. Remove the medications from their prescription drug containers.
2. Cross out your name on prescription drug containers and throw them away.
3. Mix the medications with a substance such as coffee grounds, dirt, or kitty litter. Don't mix unused medications with food.
4. Place this mixture in a plastic bag or non-recyclable container. Seal the bag or container with strong tape.
5. Place the bag or container in the trash as close to the day of pickup as possible.

Getting rid of your unused or expired medications at MSK

You can also bring your unused medications to Memorial Sloan Kettering's (MSK) medication drop off location at:

425 East 67th Street
 Haupt Pavilion, Room A105
 New York, NY 10065

The table below shows what types of medications you can and can't dispose of at MSK's drop off location.

Medications you can bring to MSK's drop off location	Medications you can't bring to MSK's drop off location
Prescription medications	Sharps, needles, or syringes
Pet medications	Inhalers or aerosol cans
Prescription patches	Chemicals
Over-the-counter medications (medications you get without a prescription)	Devices that have mercury in them, such as a thermometer or pacemaker battery
Vitamins	Medical devices
	Injectable medications (medications you take through a needle or syringe)
	Illegal drugs
	Medical marijuana

Medications That Must Be Flushed

There are certain medications that can be especially harmful or fatal if they're used by someone other than the person for whom they were prescribed. The best way to get rid of these medications is to flush them down the toilet. Visit www.mskcc.org/pe/medications_flush to see if your medication should be flushed.

If your doctor prescribed a fentanyl (Duragesic®) patch, you must flush each patch down the toilet when you're done using it.

If you have any unused fentanyl patches and there are no scheduled drug take-back events or controlled substance public disposal locations in your area, flush the unused fentanyl patches down the toilet as well.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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