Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How to Get Rid of Your Unused Medications

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

Getting Rid of Your Unused Medications

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

The best way to get rid of your 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, who's in charge of recycling programs
- Your city or town government office
- The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA's) Take Back Day website (www.dea.gov/takebackday)

Getting rid of controlled substances

Controlled substances, such as opioids (also called narcotics), are addictive. Using them too much or in the wrong way can lead to a strong, harmful need to keep using them. For that reason, you must treat controlled substances differently than other medications.

Not all drug take-back events can take controlled substances.

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 in your

area, search the DEA Diversion Control Division website (www.bit.ly/2TGiC86) or call 800-882-9539.

Follow these steps if there are no scheduled drug take-back events or controlled substance public disposal locations in your area. You can also do this if you want to dispose (get rid) of your unused medications as soon as possible.

1. Take the unused medications out of their containers.
2. If your personal information (such as your name or address) is on any containers, fully cross it out. Throw the containers away.
3. Mix the medications with a material such as coffee grounds, dirt, or kitty litter. Do not mix them with food.
4. Place the mixture in a plastic bag or non-recyclable container. Wrap the bag or container with strong tape. This will create a more secure seal and keep it from leaking.
5. Place the bag or container in the trash as close to the trash collection day as possible.

Getting rid of your unused or expired medications at MSK

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

425 East 67th Street (between York and First Avenues)
Haupt Pavilion, Room A105
New York, NY 10065

The following table shows what types of medications you can and cannot dispose of at MSK's drop-off location.

Medications you can bring to MSK's drop-off location	Medications you cannot bring to MSK's drop-off location
• Prescription medications • Pet medications	• Sharps, needles, or syringes • Inhalers or aerosol cans

• Prescription patches • Over-the-counter medications (medications you get without a prescription) • Dietary supplements, such as vitamins and herbal remedies	• Devices that have mercury in them, such as a thermometer or pacemaker battery • Medical devices • Injectable medications (medications you take through a needle or syringe) • Illegal drugs • Medical marijuana

Medications You Must Flush

If certain medications are used by someone other than who they were prescribed for, they can be very harmful or fatal (deadly). The best way to get rid of these medications is to flush them down the toilet. To see if your medication should be flushed, visit the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) flush list (www.bit.ly/3Am1Cei).

If your healthcare provider 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, bring them to a scheduled drug take-back event or a controlled substance public disposal location. If there are none in your area, flush your unused patches down the toilet.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., 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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