Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How to Get Rid of Unused Medicine

This information explains how to get rid of unused medicine.

Getting rid of unused medicine

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

The best way to get rid of unused medicine 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 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, are addictive. Opioids are also called narcotics. 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 medicine.

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

The best way to get rid of 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 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 unused medicine as soon as possible.

1. Take the unused medicine out of the container.
2. If personal information, such as a name or address, is on the container, fully cross it out. Then throw the container away.
3. Mix the medicine 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 unused or expired medicine at MSK

You can also bring unused or expired medicine to MSK's 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 medicine you can and cannot dispose of at MSK's drop-off location.

Medicine you can bring to MSK's drop-off location	Medicine you cannot bring to MSK's drop-off location
• Prescription medicine • Pet medicine • Prescription patches • Over-the-counter medicine (medicine you get without a prescription) • Dietary supplements, such as vitamins and herbal remedies	• Sharps, needles, or syringes • Inhalers or aerosol cans • Devices that have mercury in them, such as a thermometer or pacemaker battery • Medical devices • Injectable medicine (medicine you take through a needle or syringe) • Illegal drugs • Medical marijuana

Medicine you must flush

Using certain medicine that was prescribed for someone else can be very harmful or fatal (deadly). The best way to get rid of these medicines is to flush them down the toilet. Visit the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) flush list to learn more.

If your healthcare provider prescribed a fentanyl (Duragesic®) patch, you must flush each patch down the toilet after using it. Bring any unused fentanyl patches 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 questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

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