

Virginia Attorney General
Ken Cuccinelli presents:

Keeping and dIsposing of Drugs Safely

Tips for the Proper Disposal of Prescription Drugs

Drug Take-Back Programs are the safest method for disposing of prescription drugs because they are organized and closely monitored by local, state, and federal government agencies. These agencies ensure and oversee the proper disposal of the drugs in accordance with federal law. Check with your pharmacist, local law enforcement agency, or the Attorney General's website (www.vaag.com) for more information on upcoming take-back programs.

Home Disposal has risks (see reverse side for more details). However, when completed correctly, home disposal is a viable option if a take back program is not available.



○ Step 1- Remove medications from their original containers. If the medication is solid, crush it or add water to dissolve it and then mix the medication with an undesirable substance, such as kitty litter or coffee grounds. This makes the mixture unattractive to children and pets and unrecognizable to potential abusers who may go through your trash.

○ Step 2- Place the mixture in a container with a lid or in a sealable baggie to prevent the medication from leaking, and throw it into the trash.

○ Step 3- When discarding the original containers, scratch out or remove identifiers on the bottle and/or packaging.

Remember:

- DO NOT dispose of medications in the toilet or sink, unless specifically instructed to on the label.
- DO NOT give medicine to friends or family. This is not only potentially illegal, but a drug that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.
- When in doubt, consult your pharmacist.



Dangers of Not Properly Disposing of Prescription Drugs

Diversions

- A growing concern across the Commonwealth is prescription medications being taken from medicine cabinets or the trash by those who abuse drugs. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in one month alone, nearly 7 million Americans over the age of 12 reported abusing prescription medications. In fact, approximately 60 percent of people who abuse prescription painkillers indicate that they obtained the prescription drugs from friends or relatives for free, often taking the drugs without permission.
- Children or pets may ingest undisposed or improperly disposed medications. This can lead to overdose, injury, and even death.

Environmental Contamination

- Many people believe that flushing or simply throwing away drugs is the best way to dispose of medications, however, if not disposed of properly, the drugs can contaminate the ground and waterways. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove or process many compounds found in medications. Instead, when flushed or put in a landfill, the drugs are discharged into our surface and ground water.
- Pharmaceutical contaminants in water have been shown to cause serious harm to fish and wildlife living in and near rivers and lakes. Humans can also be exposed to these chemicals when they drink water drawn from contaminated bodies of water or eat wild game or fish. The long-term human health risks from exposure to even very small amounts of these chemicals is not yet known.

To prevent diversion and environmental contamination, follow the tips on the opposite side and consult a pharmacist or your local law enforcement.



"Let's keep Virginia's children and the environment safe by properly disposing of prescription drugs."

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www.vaag.com