

What should I do with medicines that are expired or I don't need anymore?

- Some medications can be thrown in the trash - but first - take them out of their bottle and mix with coffee grounds or cat litter.
- Some medications can be flushed down the toilet - but check the label first and see if it tells you it is okay.
- To dispose of drugs that aren't marked as safe to flush down the toilet, check if there are any drug take back programs in your area. These might be household hazardous waste collection events, or a program that collects drugs at a central location in order to rid of them safely. Call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service to see what you should do.

For information on drugs that should be flushed visit the FDA's website:
www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou

References

- American Association of Poison Control Centers. (2011). *FAQs*. Retrieved from www.aapcc.org/dnn/PoisoningPrevention/FAQ.aspx
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011a). *Medicine Safety: Who's At Risk and What You Can Do*. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/Features/MedicineSafety
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011b). *Unintentional Poisoning – Keeping Yourself and Others Safe*. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/Features/PoisonPrevention

What should I do if I think I or someone else overdosed on a medicine?

- Stay calm
- Call 911 if the person has fainted or is not breathing
- If the victim is awake and alert, dial the **Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222**
 - Tell the person who answers the phone:
 - Where you are – what is the address?
 - What drug the person took?
 - What time the person took the drug?
 - How old the person is and what they weigh?
- Stay on the phone until they tell you it is okay to hang up (CDC, 2011b).

OTHER RESOURCES

Massachusetts and Rhode Island Regional Center for Poison Control
www.maripoisoncenter.com

American Association of Poison Control Centers
www.aapcc.org

U.S. FDA, Using Medications Safely
www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou

Worcester Division of Public Health
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Medication Safety in Your Home



Public Health
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What is medication safety and what are adverse drug events?

Today's medicines cure infectious diseases, prevent problems from chronic diseases, and alleviate pain for millions of Americans. However, medicines can also cause harm. Known as adverse drug events, harm by medicine causes over 700,000 emergency department visits each year (CDC, 2011a).

What can you do to stay safe?

Never share or sell your medicines!

Know your medicines:

- Keep a list of the names of your medicines, how much you take, and when you take them
- Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbs
- Take this list to all your health care visits

Follow the directions:

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed
- Don't take medicines prescribed for someone else

Ask questions! Ask whoever gives you the medicine to answer these questions:

- Why am I taking this medicine?
- What are the common problems to watch out for?
- What should I do if they occur?
- When should I stop this medicine?
- Can I take this medicine with the other medicines on my list?

(CDC, 2011b)

If you have children

Children less than 5 years old are twice as likely as older children to be taken to emergency departments for adverse drug events (nearly 98,000 emergency visits each year).

Many times children find and eat or drink medicine that belongs to other people. Most of these emergency visits are due to young children finding and eating or drinking medicines on their own, without adult supervision.

- Store medicines safely
- Keep all medicines stored securely, out of the reach of children
- Leave medicines in their original packaging and make sure the caps are always tightly secured
- Never tell children that medication is candy
- Only give children medicine if their health care provider tells you to

(CDC, 2011b)

Using pain killers

In 2007, over 27,000 people died from an unintentional drug overdose (CDC, 2011a).

- Take pain relievers only as directed.
- Some medicines, when taken with pain relievers, can cause an adverse drug event, such as an overdose.
- If you are taking opioid pain relievers such as codeine, methadone, oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan) or hydrocodone (Lortab, Vicodan) be sure to tell your doctor about all other medicines you are taking.

