

U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
Protecting and Promoting *Your* Health

# Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know

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## Overview

Medicines play an important role in treating many conditions and diseases and when they are no longer needed it is important to dispose of them properly to help reduce harm from accidental exposure or intentional misuse. Below, we list some options and special instructions for you to consider when disposing of expired, unwanted, or unused medicines.

## Transfer Unused Medicine to Authorized Collectors for Disposal

Consumers and caregivers should remove expired, unwanted, or unused medicines from their home as quickly as possible to help reduce the chance that others may accidentally take or intentionally misuse the unneeded medicine.

Medicine take-back programs are a good way to safely dispose of most types of unneeded medicines. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) periodically hosts National Prescription Drug Take-Back events where collection sites are set up in communities nationwide for safe disposal of prescription drugs. Local law enforcement agencies may also sponsor medicine take-back programs in your community. Likewise, consumers can contact their local waste management authorities to learn about medication disposal options and guidelines for their area.

Another option for consumers and long-term care facilities, like nursing homes, to dispose of unneeded medicines is to transfer unused medicines to collectors registered with the DEA. DEA-authorized collectors safely and securely collect and dispose of pharmaceuticals containing controlled substances and other medicines. In your community, authorized collection sites may be retail pharmacies, hospital or clinic pharmacies, and law enforcement locations. Some authorized collection sites may also offer mail-back programs or collection receptacles, sometimes called “drop-boxes,” to assist consumers in safely disposing of their unused medicines.

Consumers can visit the [DEA's website \(http://www.dea.gov\)](http://www.dea.gov)

[/drug\\_disposal/index.html](/drug_disposal/index.html)) for more information about drug disposal, [National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day events \(http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/takeback/index.html\)](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html) and to locate a [DEA-authorized collector \(https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s1\)](https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s1) in their area. Consumers may also call the DEA Office of Diversion Control's Registration Call Center at 1-800-882-9539 to find an authorized collector in their community.

## Disposal in Household Trash

If no medicine take-back programs or DEA-authorized collectors are available in your area, you can also follow these simple steps to dispose of most medicines in the household trash:<sup>1</sup>

1. Mix medicines (do not crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as dirt, kitty litter, or used coffee grounds;
2. Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag;
3. Throw the container in your household trash;
4. Scratch out all personal information on the prescription label of your empty pill bottle or empty medicine packaging to make it unreadable, then dispose of the container.

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## Flushing of Certain Medicines

There is a small number of medicines that may be especially harmful and, in some cases, fatal with just one dose if they are used by someone other than the person for whom the medicine was prescribed. To prevent accidental ingestion of these potentially dangerous medicines by children, or pets, it is recommended that these medicines be disposed of quickly through a medicine take-back program or by transferring them to a DEA-authorized collector. If these disposal options are not readily available, it is recommended that these medicines be flushed down the sink or toilet as soon as they are no longer needed. Click here for a [list of medicines recommended for disposal by flushing.](#)

For example, patients in assisted living communities using fentanyl patches for pain should immediately flush their used or unneeded patches down the toilet. When you dispose of these patches and certain other powerful medicines down the sink or toilet you help to keep others safe by ensuring that these medicines cannot be used again or accidentally ingested and cause harm.

You may have also received disposal directions when you picked up your prescription. If your medicine is on [this list](#), and you did not receive information containing disposal instructions along with your prescription, you can find instructions on how to dispose of the medicines at [DailyMed \(http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/about.cfm\)](http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/about.cfm), by searching on the drug name and then looking in one of the following sections of the prescribing information:

- Information for Patients and Caregivers
- Patient Information
- Patient Counseling Information
- Safety and Handling Instructions
- Medication Guide

FDA remains committed to working with other federal agencies and medicine manufacturers to develop alternative, safe disposal policies. Below is some additional information about flushing medicine when it is no longer needed. If you have additional questions about disposing of your medicine, please contact us at 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332).

For additional information, see [Medication Disposal: Questions and Answers \(/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186188.htm\)](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186188.htm).

### Medicines Recommended for Disposal by Flushing

This list from FDA tells you which medicines you should flush down the sink or toilet when they are no longer needed to help prevent danger to people and pets in the home. Flushing these medicines will get rid of them right away and help keep your family and pets safe.

Links in the list below go to medicine information for consumers that includes specific disposal instructions.

[Click here for a printable version of this list \(PDF - 94B\) \(/downloads/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/UCM337803.pdf\)](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/UCM337803.pdf) (revised October 2015).

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### Medicines recommended for disposal by flushing: medicine and active ingredient

<i>Medicine</i>	<i>Active Ingredient</i>
<b>Abstral (PDF - 1M) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM239930.pdf)</b> , tablets (sublingual)	Fentanyl
<b>Actiq (PDF - 251KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM085817.pdf)</b> , oral transmucosal lozenge *	Fentanyl Citrate

<i>Medicine</i>	<i>Active Ingredient</i>
<b>Avinza (PDF - 51KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM311346.pdf)</b> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Belbuca (PDF – 44KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM470684.pdf)</b> , soluble film (buccal)	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride
<b>Buprenorphine Hydrochloride</b> , tablets (sublingual) *	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride
<b>Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride</b> , tablets (sublingual) *	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride
<b>Butrans (PDF - 388KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM219146.pdf)</b> , transdermal patch system	Buprenorphine
<b>Daytrana (PDF - 281KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM088581.pdf)</b> , transdermal patch system	Methylphenidate
<b>Demerol</b> , tablets *	Meperidine Hydrochloride
<b>Demerol</b> , oral solution *	Meperidine Hydrochloride
<b>Diastat/Diastat AcuDial (<a href="http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/drugsatfda/index.cfm?fuseaction=Search.Overview&amp;DrugName=DIASTAT">http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/drugsatfda/index.cfm?fuseaction=Search.Overview&amp;DrugName=DIASTAT</a>)</b> , rectal gel [for disposal instructions: click on link, then go to "Label information" and view current label]	Diazepam
<b>Dilaudid</b> , tablets *	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Dilaudid</b> , oral liquid *	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Dolophine Hydrochloride (PDF - 48KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM311370.pdf)</b> , tablets *	Methadone Hydrochloride
<b>Duragesic (PDF - 179KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM088584.pdf)</b> , patch (extended release) *	Fentanyl

<i>Medicine</i>	<i>Active Ingredient</i>
<b>Embeda (PDF - 39KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM179172.pdf)</b> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate; Naltrexone Hydrochloride
<b>Exalgo (PDF - 83KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM204267.pdf)</b> , tablets (extended release)	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Fentora (PDF - 338KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM088597.pdf)</b> , tablets (buccal)	Fentanyl Citrate
<b>Hysingla ER (PDF - 78KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM433047.pdf)</b> tablets (extended release)	Hydrocodone Bitartrate
<b>Kadian (PDF - 135KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM311373.pdf)</b> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Methadone Hydrochloride</b> , oral solution *	Methadone Hydrochloride
<b>Methadose</b> , tablets *	Methadone Hydrochloride
<b>Morphabond (PDF – 162 KB) (http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM467785.pdf)</b> , tablets (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Morphine Sulfate</b> , tablets (immediate release) *	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Morphine Sulfate (PDF - 282KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM199333.pdf)</b> , oral solution *	Morphine Sulfate
<b>MS Contin (PDF - 433KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM311374.pdf)</b> , tablets (extended release) *	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Nucynta ER (PDF - 38KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM270268.pdf)</b> , tablets (extended release)	Tapentadol
<b>Onsolis (PDF - 297KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM285397.pdf)</b> , soluble film (buccal)	Fentanyl Citrate
<b>Opana</b> , tablets (immediate release)	Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Opana ER (PDF - 56KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM283820.pdf)</b> , tablets (extended release)	Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Oxecta</b> , tablets (immediate release)	Oxycodone Hydrochloride

<i>Medicine</i>	<i>Active Ingredient</i>
<b>Oxycodone Hydrochloride</b> , capsules	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<b>Oxycodone Hydrochloride (PDF - 100KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM289880.pdf)</b> , oral solution	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<b>Oxycontin (PDF - 417KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM208530.pdf)</b> , tablets (extended release)	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<b>Percocet</b> , tablets *	Acetaminophen; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<b>Percodan</b> , tablets *	Aspirin; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<b>Suboxone (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM225677.pdf) (PDF - 83KB (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM225677.pdf)) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM225677.pdf)</b> , film (sublingual)	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride
<b>Targiniq ER (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM411076.pdf) (PDF - 48KB)</b> , tablets (extended release)	Oxycodone Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride
<b>Xartemis XR (PDF - 113KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM389284.pdf)</b> tablets	Oxycodone Hydrochloride; Acetaminophen
<b>Xyrem (PDF - 185KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM089830.pdf)</b> , oral solution	Sodium Oxybate
<b>Zohydro ER (PDF - 90KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM374009.pdf)</b> capsules (extended release)	Hydrocodone Bitartrate
<b>Zubsolv (PDF - 354KB) (/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/UCM362203.pdf)</b> , tablets (sublingual)	Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride

\*These medicines have generic versions available or are only available in generic formulations.

FDA continually evaluates medicines for safety risks and will update the list as needed.

List revised: October 2015

<sup>1</sup>Consumers are advised to check their local laws and ordinances to make sure medicines can legally be disposed of with their household trash.

For specific drug product labeling information, go to **DailyMed** (<http://daily-med.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/about.cfm>) or **Drugs@FDA** (<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/drugsatfda>).

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#### Additional Resources

- **[DEA Drug Disposal Information \(http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/index.html\)](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/index.html)**
- **[Safe Use Initiative: Fentanyl Transdermal System “Patches”: Safe Disposal \(/Drugs/DrugSafety/SafeUseInitiative/ucm188762.htm#fentanyl\)](#)**
- **[Safely Using Sharps \(Needles and Syringes\) at Home, at Work and on Travel \(/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/HomeHealthandConsumer/ConsumerProducts/Sharps/default.htm\)](#)**
- **[Expiration Dates Matter \(/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm251658.htm\)](#)**

#### Contact FDA

Toll Free  
(855) 543-3784, or  
(301) 796-3400  
**[druginfo@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:druginfo@fda.hhs.gov)**  
**<mailto:druginfo@fda.hhs.gov>**

**Human Drug Information**  
**[Division of Drug Information](#)**  
**<http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/OfficeofMedicalProductsandTobacco/CDER/ucm082585>** (CDER)  
Office of Communications  
**[Feedback Form](#)**  
**<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/email/cder/comment.cfm>**  
10001 New Hampshire Avenue  
Hillandale Building, 4th Floor  
Silver Spring, MD 20993

#### Resources for You

- [Safe medicine disposal options, a CDER Conversation with Douglas Throckmorton, M.D. \(/Drugs/NewsEvents/ucm464197.htm\)](#)
- [Disposal of Unused Medicines \(video\) \(/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/HealthProfessionals/ucm429508.htm\)](#)
- [How to Dispose of Unused Medicines \(/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm\)](#)
- [Medication Disposal: Questions and Answers \(/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186188.htm\)](#)
- [Fentanyl Patch Can Be Deadly to Children \(/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm300803.htm\)](#)

#### More in Safe Disposal of Medicines

[\(/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/default.htm\)](#)