

Medicine Disposal

This handout describes the risks of keeping unused or unwanted medicines or throwing them away in the trash. Safe disposal options are included.

Risks

When a prescription changes, you may have leftover pills, creams or gels. Some of these medicines can put children, teens, or other adults at risk. Prescription medicines are the second most abused drug by children and teens. Keeping left over medicine around raises the risk of someone else using them.

Some people throw away medicines in their trash. By doing this, there is still risk that someone else may use them. There is also risk that they will get into the water system causing problems for wildlife and humans.

Safe Medicine Disposal

The best option is to use a MedDrop box. Many of them are at local police stations. To find safe drop off sites, go to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration website: <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-drug-take-back-locations>

Another option is to drop them off at a local “Prescription Drug Take Back Days.” These events happen about twice a year. Call your local public health office for details about the next event.

Other Options:

- Go to the Safer Community website: www.safercommunity.net/meddrop Choose the “Drug Poisoning Prevention” tab. Click on “MedDrop.”
- Go to the Dose of Reality website: doseofrealitywi.gov/drug-takeback/find-a-take-back-location

Medicines Accepted

- Lotions/creams
- Prescription pills
- Over the counter pills
- Vitamins
- Nebulizer solutions
- Medicine samples

Medicines Not Accepted

- Sharps, Epi-pens or anything with a needle or lancet
- Large volume fluids such as IV bags or dialysis fluids
- Oxygen tanks
- Nebulizer machines
- Thermometers

Drop Off Process for MedDrop Boxes

- Empty pill bottles into a Ziplock or other bag with a seal. Recycle the empty pill bottles after removing or blacking out the prescription label.
- Leave liquids, gels, or creams in the containers and place in a separate bag.

UW Health Take Back Bin Locations

Take back bins are found in the UW Health pharmacies listed below. All are in Madison, WI.

- [1 S. Park Clinic Pharmacy, 1 S. Park Street](#)
- [Arboretum Clinic Pharmacy, 1102 S. Park Street](#)
- [Northeast Family Medical Center Pharmacy, 3209 Dryden Drive](#)
- [East Clinic Pharmacy, 5249 E. Terrace Drive](#)
- [Union Corners Clinic Pharmacy, 2402 Winnebago Street](#)
- [University Hospital Outpatient Pharmacy, 600 Highland Avenue](#)
- [UW Health at The American Center Pharmacy, 4602 Eastpark Blvd](#)

- [West Clinic Pharmacy, 451 Junction Rd](#)
- [West Towne Clinic Pharmacy, 7102 Mineral Point Rd](#)

Medicines Accepted

- Prescription pills
- Over the counter pills
- Capsules

Medicines Not Accepted

- Lotions/creams
- Liquids
- Illegal drugs
- Sharps, Epi-pens or anything with a needle or lancet
- Aerosols
- Cans
- Thermometers

Drop Off Process for Take Back Bins

Remove medicines from the container. Empty the loose pills/capsules in the bins. Recycle the empty pill bottles after removing or blacking out the prescription label.

Options If No Drop Box Available

You may also buy a Detera[®] Drug Deactivation System. It is easy to use and safe for the environment. You can buy it from local pharmacies. If you think you will need this, ask about it when picking up your medicine.

If there is no drop box in your area, mix the pills with either kitty litter or coffee grounds. Seal in a plastic bag and throw in the trash.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7612.