

Parents and Caregivers of Children: *It's Important to Safely Dispose of Opioids*



Help keep your family and community safe, starting in your home—get rid of any unused or expired prescription opioids that may be hiding in cabinets, drawers, or anywhere else you store medicine. Remove these medicines as soon as possible to reduce the chance that your child may accidentally take medicine you do not need.

WHAT IS AN OPIOID?

Prescription opioids are powerful pain-reducing medicines; they include oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, and others. Doctors prescribe opioids after surgeries and for injuries; however, these medicines can have serious risks if children accidentally take them.

WHY IS OPIOID DISPOSAL IMPORTANT FOR ME AND MY CHILD?

Children getting into medicine on their own is a major source of poisoning emergencies in the United States.¹

Every year, there are thousands of calls to poison control centers after children take medicine that was not prescribed for them.² Many visits to the emergency room for children's poisoning involve children under 2 years old who accidentally take medicine at home.³ Research shows that even child-resistant containers cannot prevent a child from taking medicines that aren't meant for them.

HOW DO I SAFELY DISPOSE OF OPIOIDS?

Ask these questions to determine how to dispose of opioids:

1. Is a [medicine take-back option](#) readily available? If so, this is the preferred option.
2. If not, is the medicine on the FDA "[flush list](#)"? If it is, flush it down the toilet.
3. Otherwise, throw it away in the household trash, following the directions at www.FDA.gov/DrugDisposal.

For information about all three of these methods, visit www.FDA.gov/DrugDisposal.



Keeping unused opioids in the home creates a serious health risk, especially for children.

Remember:

- Don't share your opioid prescription with others.
- Store opioids out of sight and out of reach of children in your home.
- Dispose of unused opioids safely when there is no longer a medical need for them.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *PROTECT Initiative: Advancing Children's Medication Safety*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Last updated October 30, 2017. https://www.cdc.gov/medicationsafety/protect/protect_initiative.html.

² Gummin DD, Mowry JB, Spyker DA, Brooks DE, Fraser MO, Banner W. 2016 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System (NPDS): 34th Annual Report. *Clin Toxicol (Phila)*. 2017 Dec;55(10):1072-1252.

³ Lovegrove MC, Weidle NJ, Budnitz DS. Trends in emergency department visits for unsupervised pediatric medication exposures, 2004-2013. *Pediatrics*. 2015 Oct;136(4):e821-829.