

Safe Medicine Storage and Disposal to Prevent Misuse

Medicines can do a lot of good, but they can cause harm if they get in the wrong hands or are used the wrong way. This is true for both prescription and over-the-counter medicines. Safe storage and disposal of medicine in the home is one way to help keep children and teens safe from accidental ingestion and medicine misuse.

What is medicine misuse?

Medicine misuse includes taking:

- Someone else's medicine
- Too much medicine
- Medicine any other way than how it was prescribed

Medicines are harmful when misused. Prescription medicines are not the same for everybody - dosages, instructions and side effects all vary based on the individual.

What you can do

Engage

Teens who misuse medicines most often get them from their own home, a relative's home or a friend's home. Take opportunities to talk with kids and teens about the dangers of taking medicine that is not prescribed to them.

Store

The safest way to keep medicines stored is to lock them up where others cannot access them. Lock up medicines in a safe, cabinet or lockable box. Store refrigerated medicine in a lockable box, away from food items.

Monitor

Note the number of pills in bottles and pill packets, and keep track of use and refills. As your



child gets older, supervise them as they start taking their own medicines. If your child or teen has a prescription for pain medicine, an adult should give them the proper amount as needed and track doses on a log. Some families do this for ADHD, anxiety and other medicines as well.

Dispose

No longer need a medicine? Is any medicine at home expired? Safely dispose of it as soon as possible by using one of the methods below. In the meantime, securely lock it up.

- Participate in a drug take-back day.
- Use a medicine disposal kiosk or a drug mail-back.
- Ask at your pharmacy, local police or sheriff station if they will accept prescription medicines, or know where you can dispose of them.
- Use 'DisposeRx' if your pharmacy gave you a package of this disposal product.

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If these options are not available, dispose of unused medicines by following these steps:

1. Fill a container with some water. Make sure the container has a lid.
2. Add something inedible to the container like cat litter or coffee grounds.
3. Add whole pills to the mixture.
4. Tape the container lid shut and seal it in a bag.
5. Place the container in the garbage close to trash collection day.
6. Make sure that the trash is not easy for people or pets to access.

Medicine safety tips

- Do not flush medicine down the drain or toilet. This protects the environment by keeping harmful substances out of the water supply.
- Never share medicines with anyone else.
- Be sure to remove any personal information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw away the container.
- Encourage friends, relatives and neighbors to safely store and dispose of their medicines, too.

To Learn More

- med-project.org
- drugfree.org
- takebackyourmeds.org
- healthychildren.org
- seattlechildrens.org
- Your child's healthcare provider

Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call Marketing Communications at 206-987-5323.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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