

# Highlight Med Disposal Options for Patients

Patients will ask for your help **disposing of old or unused meds**.

Take-back programs are the best route for med disposal.

But DEA has canceled the Nat'l Rx Take-Back Day scheduled for April 25...due to COVID-19.

Help steer patients to other alternatives.

Highlight ongoing options...mail-back programs, receptacles at pharmacies or police stations, etc. Search DEA's Public Disposal Locations site...or even type "drug disposal near me" in Google Maps.

Point to sharps containers to dispose of needles, auto-injectors, etc...some collection sites take these. Or try [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](http://SafeNeedleDisposal.org) for local sharps disposal options.

If a take-back program isn't an option, most meds can be thrown in the trash. But it's important patients do this correctly.

Some pharmacies are giving patients products that deactivate meds before discarding...such as *Deterra* or *DisposeRx*.

Otherwise patients should mix meds with cat litter, coffee grounds, etc...then put the meds in an unmarked sealed bag or container. These rules also apply to empty vials or insulin pens without needles.

Keep in mind, some meds...such as inhalers or chemo...may need to be disposed of differently. Patients should check product labels for guidance...or call local waste management for state or local rules.

Patients should generally avoid flushing meds...because of concerns about contaminating the water supply.

Be aware FDA's "flush list" outlines a few controlled Rx exceptions...fentanyl patches, oxycodone tabs, etc. But this method is ONLY for when take-back isn't an option and local rules permit.

In this case, the risk of harm from misuse or diversion far outweighs any environmental risk. In fact, the majority of meds detected in the water supply is due to normal bodily excretion.

Share our patient handout, *Med Disposal Guide*, for tips.

## Key References:

- Ann Intern Med Published online Dec 31, 2019; doi:10.7326/M19-2409
- J Am Pharm Assoc (2003) 2019;59(6):809-815.e5
- [www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/where-and-how-dispose-unused-medicines](http://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/where-and-how-dispose-unused-medicines) (3-24-20)

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