



PRESCRIPTION DRUG SAFETY AND DISPOSAL eBOOK



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rx Disposal Overview	1
Why to Clean Your Medicine Cabinet	2
4 Ways to Dispose	3
Signs & Symptoms	5



RX DISPOSAL OVERVIEW

Most Americans inadvertently keep expired medication in their medicine cabinets. In fact, surveys indicate that the average length of time an American holds on to unused prescription medication is three years – that’s 1,095 days that it could pose a danger to you, members of your household and visitors to your home.



WHY TO CLEAN YOUR MEDICINE CABINET?

“IT’S STILL GOOD!” UNDERSTANDING THE RISK OF TOXICITY

The medications you take, alone or in combination with others, are usually well monitored by your physician and pharmacist. Randomly taking old medications may be contraindicated with drugs you are currently taking and neither your physician nor pharmacist will know you are taking the expired drugs at the same time. Additionally, your medical condition may change over time, making certain medicines inappropriate for you.

HOLDING ON TO UNUSED MEDICATIONS IS A TICKING TIME BOMB FOR MISUSE

Even if the expired drugs themselves aren’t poisonous, saving these medications is a bad practice for many reasons. Taking leftover and expired antibiotics the next time you feel sick can actually worsen your condition if you are infected with different bacteria. You could also cause the bacteria to become stronger and drug-resistant if you don’t take a full course of the antibiotic as directed by your doctor.

Storing leftover and expired prescription medications also offers a tempting treasure-trove for potential misuse and diversion. Although the current crisis of opioid abuse is in the spotlight, these are not the only drugs which are targets for theft and potential addiction. Anti-anxiety drugs, antidepressants, stimulants and even prescription-strength antihistamines have both street value and addictive properties and should be properly disposed of as soon as you no longer require the medication.¹

One important step we can all take to help address addiction is to safely dispose of old and unused prescription medication. Prescription medication can be extremely dangerous if they fall into the wrong hands. It takes mere moments to safely dispose of old medications, but this precaution can have a lifelong impact.

4 WAYS TO DISPOSE



1. ORDER A KIT

Order an Addiction Policy Forum Rx Disposal Kit from our website.



2. PHARMACY DISPOSAL

Many pharmacies have medication drop boxes or kiosks. Visit our website to find a pharmacy collection site near you.



3. DIY HOME DISPOSAL

No kit? No problem! Mix (don't crush) your old and unused medication with cat litter or used coffee grounds. Put this mixture into a sealed container, such as a plastic bag or coffee can, and throw it away. Call the FDA to see if this method is appropriate for your meds: (855) 543-3784.



4. TAKE BACK EVENTS

The DEA hosts National Prescription Drug Take Back Day events every fall and spring, as well as permanent collection sites year-round. Visit our website to find a collection site near you.



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH SUBSTANCE USE?

If you can't seem to stop taking drugs or alcohol - even if you want to – or if the urge to use is too strong to control and you know it is causing harm, you might have a substance use disorder.²

ASK YOURSELF

1. Do you think about or crave drugs or alcohol often?
2. Have you ever tried to stop or cut down on drug or alcohol use but couldn't?
3. Have you ever felt as though you wouldn't be able to fit in or have a good time without being under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
4. Do you find yourself using more than you meant | to or needing more to get the same effect?
5. Have you ever used a drug without knowing what it was or how it could impact you?
6. Have you ever taken one drug to get over the effects of another?
7. Have you ever made a mistake at work or school because you were using drugs or alcohol?
8. Does the thought of running out of drugs or alcohol scare you?
9. Have you ever stolen drugs from someone or stolen money in order to pay for drugs?
10. Have you ever been arrested or hospitalized because of your drug or alcohol use?
11. Have you ever overdosed?
12. Has using drugs or alcohol hurt your relationship with family and friends?

If the answer to some or all of these questions is “yes,” you might be struggling with a substance use disorder or problem substance use. People from all backgrounds can develop a substance use disorder. Don't wait for your symptoms to worsen before you seek treatment; addiction tends to become more severe the longer it is left untreated.

Visit: AddictionResourceCenter.org for more information.



RESOURCES AND CITATIONS

FOOTNOTES

1. <https://blog.disposerx.com/2019/01/expired-medication-risks/>
2. <https://www.addictionpolicy.org/hubfs/8.5x11%20Signs%20&%20Symptoms.pdf>

RESOURCES

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