

**Office of Integrated Health
Health & Safety Information**

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Why and How to Dispose Medications

Expired, Unwanted, or Unused medicines should be discarded consistent with 12VAC35-105-770. Medication Management... “The provider shall promptly dispose of discontinued drugs, outdated drugs....”

There are two main ways this can be done:

1. Through a drug “take back” program.
2. Through a home disposal method.



Drug Take Back Programs

- National Prescription Drug Take Back Day which is sponsored by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in communities nationwide.
- Many communities also have their own drug take back programs.
- Find a location near you of a DEA-authorized collector in your community
- CVS Drug Disposal Program
- Check with your pharmacist.

Three ways to Dispose of Medicines at Home

1) Flushing medicines

Because some medicines could be especially harmful to others, they have specific directions to immediately flush them down the sink or toilet when they are no longer needed.

2) Disposing medicines in household trash

Almost all medicines can be thrown into your household trash. These include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs in pills, liquids, drops, patches, creams, and inhalers. Follow these steps:

1. Remove the drugs from their original containers and mix them with something undesirable, such as used coffee grounds, dirt, or cat litter.
2. Put the mixture in a leak proof container.
3. Throw the container in the garbage.
4. Scratch out all personal information to protect your privacy.

3) Use a Medication Disposal Pouch or Container



You can now get a drug disposal bag from your Local Health Department.

(<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/blog/2016/11/15/how-to-dispose-of-unused-medicine/>)

Once you get your bag you can deactivate medications in three easy steps:

1. Place unused medication in the pouch
2. Fill halfway with Warm Tap Water
3. Gently Shake

If you have a question about your specific medications, Always ask your health care provider or pharmacist!!

For example, there are specific instructions for some medications such as:

Disposing of Fentanyl Patches

- Even after a patch is used, a lot of the medicine remains. That's why the drug comes with instructions to flush used or leftover patches.

Disposing of Inhaler Products

There are environmental concerns with disposing inhalers.

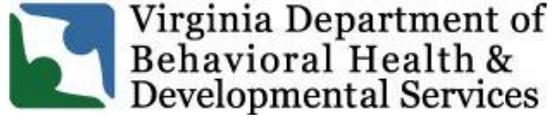
Read handling instructions on the labeling of inhalers and aerosol products.

- These products could be dangerous if punctured or thrown into a fire or incinerator.
- To properly dispose of these products and follow local regulations and laws, contact your trash and recycling facility.

References:

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