

## Proper Disposal of Unused Prescription Medications



The FDA worked with the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to develop the first consumer guidance for proper disposal of unused or expired prescription drugs.

### The federal guidelines are:

1. Follow any specific disposal instructions on the drug label or patient information that accompanies the medication. Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet unless this information specifically instructs you to do so.
2. If there are no specific instructions for your medication, you may throw the drugs in the household trash, *but first*:
  - Take them out of their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter. The medication will be less appealing to children and pets, and unrecognizable to people who may intentionally go through your trash.
  - Put them in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container to prevent the medication from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.
  - Before throwing out a medicine container, scratch out all identifying information on the prescription label to make it unreadable. This will help protect your identity and the privacy of your personal health information.
  - When in doubt about proper disposal, talk to your pharmacist.

Do not give medications to friends. Doctors prescribe drugs based on a person's specific symptoms and medical history. A drug that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.

### Medication Take-Back Campaigns

- American Medicine Chest Challenge  
[www.americanmedicinechest.com](http://www.americanmedicinechest.com)
- Operation Take Back New Jersey  
[www.operationtakebacknj.com](http://www.operationtakebacknj.com)

## Education and Referral Information

Additional resources:

[www.rx.samsha.gov](http://www.rx.samsha.gov)  
[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)  
[www.drugfreeenj.com](http://www.drugfreeenj.com)  
[www.drugfreeamerica.com](http://www.drugfreeamerica.com)  
[www.rxsafetymatters.org](http://www.rxsafetymatters.org)

Narcotics Anonymous:  
800-974-0062  
24 hours/7 days a week



Compliments of:  
Bergen County Prevention Coalition

For more information, call 201-488-8680  
or email [bcpcnj@cafsnj.org](mailto:bcpcnj@cafsnj.org)

FACTS AND TIPS

## The New “Party” Drugs!

**Prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs** are important and helpful products that can improve and save lives when used the right way, for the right reasons, and taken in the right dosage, by the right person.

Many parents are not aware that their own medicine cabinet and computers can be a source of a variety of drugs for misuse and abuse.

Inappropriate use of these items can cause increases in blood pressure and heart rate, addiction, organ damage, difficulty breathing, seizures, coma or even death.

### Youth Prescription Drug Abuse Statistics

Youth prescription drug abuse is a problem in New Jersey. About 1 in 5 New Jersey youth grades 9–12 report having used a prescription drug not prescribed to them to get high.

- 1 in 5 teens have tried Vicodan.
- 1 in 10 has tried Oxcontin (Oxycondone).
- 1 in 10 has abused Ritalin or Adderall.
- 1 in 11 admitted getting high on cough medicine.

### But, the good news is. . .

Youth who learn about the risks of these and other drugs from their parents are half as likely to abuse them.

Non-medical use of prescription drugs is the second most popular category of drug abuse after marijuana. The perception is that they are “safe” because they are a prescribed and professionally manufactured product.

### Prescription drugs (especially opiates) can be addictive and a gateway to other drugs, such as heroin.

Many prescription drugs can be addictive. Some prescription pain relievers like Oxycotin, Demerol, Tylenol with Codeine, Percocet and Vicoin contain opioids—which are opiates, as is heroin. You might hear youth call them by their street names: o.c., oxy, oxycotton, percs, and vics, to name just a few.

### Addiction can have rapid onset with opiates, especially among youth.

Some youth swallow the pills, others crush them first and then snort or smoke the powder; some melt or dissolve the medications and then inject them. Once a youth becomes an injection drug user they have overcome a major barrier to trying heroin.

## Parents: Are You Aware?

### Some of the most dangerous drugs might be in your own home in your medicine cabinet.

Many youth who abuse prescription drugs start by experimenting with whatever they find in the house.

Youth get access to powerful prescription drugs in their own homes, the homes of friends, neighbors and relatives, on the internet and even from the family doctors or dentists.

### Prescription drugs can be dangerous, they are not safer than “illegal” drugs.

Prescription drugs may seem safe because they are “legal” and “prescribed,” but they are not.

Used improperly, either alone or taken with other drugs or alcohol, prescription drugs can have serious physical side effects such as vomiting, diarrhea or severe constipation, extreme shaking, and loss of consciousness—and result in addiction or death.

It is illegal to use drugs without a valid prescription or distribute them. The drug must be used by the person named on the prescription and in the manner prescribed only. The penalties associated with the abuse or illegal distribution vary depending upon the drug type.

### Signs and Symptoms

- Change in friends, appearance, eating or sleeping habits.
- Change in personality.
- Declining grades or job performance, poor attendance.
- Unusual or medicinal smells on your child or in their room.
- Empty packages of pills or bottles of cough syrup in backpacks or bedrooms or school locker.
- Disappearing medications from your (or relative’s) medicine cabinets.

### What You Can Do

- *Monitor and secure your medicine cabinet.* Know what is in it, keep track of it and keep it safe from children and teens.
- *Monitor all medications your children are taking.* An adult—parent or school nurse—should administer your child’s medication.
- *Educate yourself and talk to your kids.* Many youth don’t believe a prescription medicine can be dangerous.

## Myths and Facts!

### Myths

- These drugs are safe; after all they are prescribed by doctors.
- “It’s okay, my mother takes this.” Or younger sibling. Or other person they know.
- They are safer than illegal drugs.
- They are not addictive.
- There is no danger the first time you do it.
- Everyone is doing it.

### Facts

- Medications don’t always react the same way in every person.
- Combining even one drug with alcohol or other medications can produce unpredictable results.
- Teens abuse narcotic pain relievers more than any other prescription medication.
- Abuse can lead to addiction—or death.

### Do You Know These Terms?

- “Pharming”—using prescription drugs to or over-the-counter drugs to get high.
- “Bowling” or “pharm” parties — mixing medications and taking them randomly—often by the handful.
- “Happy Little Pill Time”—taking and sharing pills on the way to school.
- OTC-over-the-counter medications (i.e. cough and cold medications, pills or liquids; pain relievers)
- DXM-(Dextromethorphan) the active ingredient in over 100 drug products, especially cough and cold medicines.
- “Robo-tripping,” “Robo-fizzing,” “Skittling” or “Dex-ing”—abuse of cough medicine.
- “Smurfing”—buying medications from more than one retail store.

### Parents, know they are listening to you, even if seems like they are not.

Children, even teens and young adults, who receive education about drugs and alcohol from their parents are less likely to use them. Tell your kids about the negative effects prescription drug abuse can have on their physical appearance, their health, their relationships and their self-respect.