

GUIDELINES FOR MEDICATION SAFETY

The disposal of unused medication and hazardous waste can be a daunting task. There are federal guidelines for the proper disposal of these items. These are suggestions for their disposal.

Know Your Medicines

1. Keep a list of all medications, including over-the-counter and herbal medicine. Have this list available to show your healthcare providers and pharmacist.
2. Learn the names (generic and trade) of the medicines and the reasons for taking them.
3. Know possible side effects of medications. If you believe that you or someone in your care is having a drug interaction, call your doctor or pharmacist immediately.

When Receiving Medication from the Pharmacy

1. Examine the label and contents when you pick up a prescription. Ask the pharmacist about anything on the label you do not understand.
2. If the pills look different than those you were taking, tell your pharmacist immediately.

GUIDELINES FOR MEDICAL DISPOSAL

Disposing of Medication

1. Current federal guidelines recommend flushing certain controlled substances (like opioid pain killers) down the toilet as these medications can be extremely harmful if ingested and are often abused. The FDA believes that the risk associated with accidental exposure to this small, select list of medicines far outweighs any potential risk associated with disposal by flushing. Disposing of these medicines in the toilet completely eliminates the risk of harm to people in the home.
 - a. For a list of medications that the FDA recommends flushing, visit www.fda.gov/Drugs and search 'disposal of controlled drugs'.
 - b. Pain killer patches (like Fentanyl) should be folded in half with the sticky sides together and then flushed.
2. Other medications that are not controlled substances may be disposed of as follows:
 - a. Medicine Take-Back Programs: Contact your local city/county government's household trash/recycling service and ask if there is a medicine take-back program in your area. You could also ask your local pharmacist. Medicine Take-Back programs are becoming more available. The program allows for the drop-off of unneeded medications. Generally these programs only accept non-controlled medications. To learn more, do an internet search on 'medicine take-back'.
 - b. Mail-In Medication Take-Back: Contact your local pharmacy to inquire about a mail-in medication option. Several local pharmacies sell prepaid return envelopes. You place your unneeded medications in the envelope and simply mail. Note: you may NOT mail-in controlled medications.
 - c. Disposal in Household Trash: Follow these steps recommended by the Federal government:
 - i. Follow any specific disposal instructions on the drug label of patient information that accompanies the medication.
 - ii. Take medication out of original container and mix medication (do NOT crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as a kitty litter or used coffee grounds. (This makes it less appealing to children and pets and unrecognizable to people who may intentionally go through your trash.
 - iii. Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag.
 - iv. Throw the container out in your household trash. To safeguard private health information, cross out the personal information on the medication containers before discarding them. A black, permanent marker is helpful.
 - v. Additionally, do not give medication to friends.
 - vi. When in doubt about proper disposal, ask a pharmacist.
 - vii. Don't share your prescription medications with anyone; don't take medication prescribed for someone else.
 - viii. Use one pharmacy, so it can detect drug interactions and call your doctor if any interactions are detected.

How to Take Medication

1. Take medications as prescribed or directed by your physician.
2. Don't crush or split pills unless you have been instructed to do so by your doctor or pharmacist.
3. If you miss a dose of your medication or if you mistakenly take more medication than recommended, call your doctor or pharmacist.

Storing Medication

1. Store your medications as directed, in a safe place away from heat, moisture or freezing temperatures.
2. Discard outdated medications. Expired medication can lose its effectiveness, and keeping discontinued medication in your home can make it all too easy for mix-ups to occur.
3. Keep medication out of the reach of children. Use a lockbox if necessary.
4. Never combine multiple medications in one bottle. Although you may think you will remember which pill is which, anyone can make a mistake that could lead to a dangerous medication error.
5. Consider using a pill container to best organize medications.

US Environmental Protection Agency's Needle Disposal Recommendations

1. Place sharps in a hard plastic or metal container with a crew-on cap or tightly secured lid.
2. Reinforce the lid of the container with heavy duty tape.
3. Label container 'Not For Recycling'.
4. Do not place container in recycling receptacles.
5. Do not use containers made of glass or clear plastic.
6. Keep containers out of reach of children and pets.

LOCAL SITES FOR HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

City of Houston North HHW Collection Facility

5614 Neches Street, Houston, Texas 77026
713-551-7355 | www.houstontx.gov
Open on the second Thursday of each month from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

City of Houston Environmental Service Center

11500 South Post Oak, Houston, Texas 77035
713-551-7355 | www.houstontx.gov

Note: These City of Houston facilities are open only to residents of the City of Houston and to those from surrounding cities participating in the HHW Voucher Program. City of Houston residents do not require a county voucher and may use these facilities free of charge by presenting a current water bill and matching driver's license.

Fort Bend County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility

1200 Blume Road, Rosenberg, Texas 77471
281-633-7576 | www.co.fort-bend.tx.us/county_services/Engineering/recycle_hhwaste.htm
Open Monday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the first Saturday of the month from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Note: This center is open to residents of Fort Bend County. There are fees charged at this facility. Please call for further information.

Montgomery County Recycling Center - Precinct 3

1122 Pruitt Road, Spring, Texas 77380
281-367-7283 (SAVE) - www.co.montgomery.tx.us/commis3/recycle/householdchemicalwastefacility.pdf
Open Monday through Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pharmaceuticals in limited quantities - NO controlled substances.

Note: Proof of Montgomery County residency required.

Houston Hospice is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization. Our mission is to provide uncompromising, compassionate end-of-life care to patients and families in our community.