



How to Secure and Dispose of Unused Medicines

(Adapted by ODCP from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration)

Prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse is an increasing concern in Iowa, and is the fastest growing form of youth substance abuse in America. Medicines can pose a danger to those who abuse them, and the improper disposal of pharmaceuticals can harm the environment. You can help prevent medicine abuse by following these tips:

Securing Your Medicines

- Store prescription and over-the-counter medicine in a **SAFE** place, out of children's reach. Treat the storage of medicine around children as you would poisonous household cleaners. An unsecure medicine cabinet may not be the best place.
- Be sure bottles and tubes are properly labeled, and that child-proof caps are in place.
- **TALK** with children about medicine abuse dangers, set boundaries, establish consequences, and explain why you care (Example: "Sara, do not take any medicine unless your dad or I give it to you. If you do, you'll be grounded for a month. Taking someone else's medicine, or too much of yours, could make you sick. We love you and don't want you to get hurt.")
- If you are unsure of a medicine's potential for abuse, **ASK** your pharmacist.
- Promptly dispose of medicine no longer needed, or if the medicine has become outdated.



Disposing of Unused Medicines



Photo Illustration: FDA/Michael Ermarth

- Follow 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.
- If no disposal instructions are provided, throw drugs in the household trash **AFTER** you: (a) take them out of their original container and mix them with an undesirable substance such as coffee grounds or kitty litter; and (b) put them in a sealable bag, empty can or other container to prevent the medication from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.
- **Scratch** out all identifying information on prescription labels before disposing of medicine containers.
- Do not give medications to friends. A drug that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.
- **When** in doubt about proper disposal procedures, **TALK** to your pharmacist.

Get more information at www.iowa.gov/odcp