

# SAFELY DISPOSING of Unused Opioids

ALLIED AGAINST  
**Opioid Abuse**

## The Problem



In 2018, more than **9.9 million** Americans misused prescription opioids.<sup>i</sup>



**130 Americans** die every day from an opioid overdose.<sup>ii</sup>

## Safe Disposal Can Help Prevent Misuse

Safe disposal is an important part of addressing the opioid abuse epidemic:



**Some medicines may be especially harmful and, in some cases, fatal** with just one dose if they are used by someone other than the person for whom the medicine was prescribed.<sup>iii</sup>



**Unused medicines are a main source for misuse and overdose.** Approximately 51.3 percent of those who misused prescription pain relievers in 2018 said that they obtained the medicine from a friend or relative.<sup>iv</sup>



**Accidental exposure to and improper disposal of fentanyl patches are also a risk**, especially for young children who could put it in their mouth or on their skin.<sup>v</sup>

## What You Can Do



**Follow disposal directions** you received with your medicines. If you did not receive directions, ask your healthcare professional or pharmacist about disposal or consult the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [guidelines](#).



Take advantage of **programs that accept unused medications** for proper disposal. Find the disposal location in your area by visiting [www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org/disposal](http://www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org/disposal).



**Flush your prescription.** Many opioids are included on the [FDA's list of medicines recommended for disposal by flushing](#).



Ask your physician's office or pharmacist if they provide **medication disposal bags** (these bags neutralize medicines to avoid damage to the environment).



The FDA recommends **folding fentanyl patches in half** with the sticky sides together before flushing.



You can also **combine medication with dirt, kitty litter or used coffee grounds** and place the mixture in a sealed plastic bag before discarding in the trash.



**Scratch out all personal information** on prescription containers before discarding.



If you or someone close to you has an addiction to pain medication, talk to your healthcare professional or contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's treatment help line at **(800) 662-HELP**.

Allied Against Opioid Abuse is a national education and awareness initiative to help prevent abuse and misuse of prescription opioids. Founded by the Healthcare Distribution Alliance, the initiative is a collaborative effort with diverse partners across the pharmaceutical supply chain, as well as organizations that are experts in public health and healthcare. Our goal is to contribute to solving the opioid crisis in a meaningful way by educating patients about their rights, risks and responsibilities. To learn more visit [www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org](http://www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org) or follow us on Twitter @AAOA\_Tweets.



NCPIE encourages healthcare professionals and community groups to foster patient-professional communication about medicines. However, NCPIE does not supervise or endorse the activities of any group or professional. Discussion and action concerning medicines are solely the responsibility of the patient and their healthcare professionals, and not NCPIE. Please consult a licensed healthcare professional with questions or concerns about your medication and/or condition.

<sup>i</sup> New England Journal of Medicine: [www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1714529](http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1714529)

<sup>ii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html)

<sup>iii</sup> Food and Drug Administration: [www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm)

<sup>iv</sup> 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2018-nsduh-annual-national-report>

<sup>v</sup> Food and Drug Administration: [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm300803.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm300803.htm)