Safe Storage and Disposal of Unused Prescription Opioids

Safe storage and disposal are important parts of reducing abuse and misuse of prescription opioids, because prescription opioid misuse often starts in the home. Prescription opioids are medications prescribed by doctors to treat pain and should be used as directed. Opioids should never be shared with anyone else.

What do you do when prescription opioids are taken home?

**Safely store them.** When prescription opioids are brought into the home, they must be kept in a secure location, like a locked cabinet or lockbox. Do not store opioids in an unlocked medicine cabinet or on the kitchen counter. Keep them out of reach of young children, family members and house guests to prevent misuse.

What do you do with unused pills?

**Safely dispose of them as soon as possible.** The majority of patients who receive an opioid prescription often have leftover pills. It is very important that any unused pills are safely disposed of when there is no longer a medical need for them.

Where can you dispose of excess medication?

Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about what to do with your leftover pills, including if they offer on-site medicine drop-off boxes, mail-back programs or at home disposal solutions. Many pharmacies and police departments have drop-off boxes to safely dispose of unused medicine.

During the National Prescription Drug Take Back Days in April and October, you can dispose of medicines at secure locations in your community.

Allied Against Opioid Abuse also has created an online disposal tool with information about state and national disposal programs. Visit [www.againstopioidabuse.org/disposal](http://www.againstopioidabuse.org/disposal) for more information.

Have other questions related to prescription opioids?

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns with the opioid medication they have prescribed.