

The Safe Use and Disposal of Prescription Medications



Safety Tips

- Take your medication only as directed.
- Carefully note the time a medication was administered and consider writing it down.
- Do not cut pills in half or crush them to make them easier to swallow. This can change the way the medication is released into your system and can have serious consequences.
- Never share your medication with someone else, as this is illegal.
- Do not take more than prescribed, even if pain relief is less than desirable. This could result in an accidental overdose especially when you are new to a medication.
- Store medication in a safe place that only you can access:
 - In a locked drawer
 - On high shelf
 - In a lock box or home safe
- Keep all medicines out of the reach of children and pets.
- Keep medications in their original packaging until you are ready to take them.
- If you see or experience any of the following symptoms, get emergency help right away:
 - slow heartbeat
 - trouble breathing or slow, shallow breathing
 - severe sleepiness
 - cold, clammy skin
 - faintness
 - dizziness
 - confused thinking
 - trouble walking or talking normally
 - seizure
 - hallucinations
 - unusual snoring

Parents and guardians should administer the medication as directed to ensure patient safety and to avoid misuse.

Remember, medications are safe and effective when used as directed and under the care of a professional.

Proper Disposal Tips

Careful use and storage of your medications keeps everyone safe and so does thoughtful and proper disposal of unused medicines.



Medicine Take-Back Programs

- Medicine “take-back” programs are a good way to dispose of expired, unwanted or unused medicines and reduce the chance that someone other than the intended patient might take the medication.
- Contact your trash and recycling service to see if there is a medicine take-back program in your community. Learn about any special rules regarding which medicines can be taken back.
- Ask your pharmacist if he or she knows of medicine disposal programs in your area. Visit aaoms.org or the US Drug Enforcement Administration’s Web site for information about National Prescription Drug Take-Back Events.

Disposal in Household Trash

- If no medicine take-back program is available in your area, follow these simple steps to dispose of most medicines in the household trash:
 - Mix medicines (do NOT crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds;
 - Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag; and
 - Place the container in your household trash.
- Peel off or scratch out all information on the prescription label to make it unreadable before disposing of your empty pill bottle or other empty medicine packaging.



The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), the professional organization representing more than 9,000 oral and maxillofacial surgeons in the United States, supports its members’ ability to practice their specialty through education, research and advocacy. AAOMS members comply with rigorous continuing education requirements and submit to periodic office anesthesia evaluations.

The information provided in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is provided to help you communicate effectively with your oral and maxillofacial surgeon. Always seek the advice of your oral and maxillofacial surgeon regarding an oral health concern.

To find an oral and maxillofacial surgeon in your community, visit the “Find a Surgeon” database at MyOMS.org, or call the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons at 800/822-6637.

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