

How to Get Rid of Medicines Safely



Allina Health



Getting Rid of Medicines

Properly getting rid of medicines is important to keep your family and community safe. This protects the environment and prevents adults, children and pets from finding and being harmed by your medicines.

Take-back Programs

Many cities and counties offer medicine take-back programs for you to drop off your unwanted medicines to be properly thrown away. Your city or county government's household trash and recycling service will have information about the programs in your area.

For more information about take-back programs or to find your county's information, visit the following websites:

■ **Minnesota:**

rethinkrecycling.com/residents

- Type "medicines" in the search box.
- Click on *Medicine, Prescription Drugs, Needles and Sharps* from search results.
- Scroll down to find your county under Recycling & Disposal Information.

■ **Wisconsin:**

dnr.wi.gov

- Type "health care waste" in the search box.
- Click on the light-purple *Find* box.
- Scroll down to find take-back programs in your county.

You can also get information about your city or county government's household trash and recycling service by calling them at the number listed on their website.

Always take your unwanted medicine to a take-back program in your area. You may throw your unwanted medicine in the trash only if your community does not offer a take-back program and there are not any directions on your medicine container.

Did You Know?

Many retail pharmacies offer drop-off containers for medicines.

How to Prepare Your Medicine Container for Throwing It in the Trash

Read the safety information on your medicine container and follow any special directions.

If there are not any special directions, take the following steps to prepare your medicine container for throwing it in the trash.

- Scratch off your name, your health care provider's name and the prescription number on the medicine label. You can also scribble the information out with a black marker or pen. Doing this will protect your identity but leaves important safety information in case someone finds your medicine.
- Keep the medicine in its original container.



Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Scratch off personal information but leave safety information on the bottle.

How to Prepare Your Medicine for Throwing It in the Trash

- **Solid medicines such as pills tablets:**
Add a small amount of vinegar to dissolve most of the medicine.
- **Liquid medicines:**
Make an unappealing mixture by adding charcoal, sawdust, kitty litter, salt, flour, turmeric or other nontoxic powdered spices.
- **Blister packs:**
Wrap in several layers of tape. Use tape you cannot see through such as duct tape.



Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Add a small amount of vinegar to solid medicines to dissolve most of the medicine.

How to Seal and Disguise Your Medicine Container to Throw It Away

- ❑ Tape the cap of your medicine container shut with a strong tape (duct or packaging tape).
- ❑ Put the taped medicine container in a bag or other container that you cannot see through (paper lunch bag or an empty yogurt, sour cream or coffee container).
Do not put your medicine container in food products. This may encourage animals or children to eat or drink your medicine.
- ❑ Throw the container in the trash (not the recycling bin).



Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Put your taped medicine container in another container you cannot see through such as an empty yogurt container.

Activated Charcoal Pouch

Another option for getting rid of your medicines is an activated charcoal pouch. Your health care provider may give you one or you may buy one at some pharmacies.

How it works

- Place your unwanted medicines (pills, patches, liquids) in the pouch.
- Add warm water to the pouch and seal it. The activated charcoal lining will dissolve the medicines.
- Throw the pouch in the trash (not the recycling bin).

Talk with your health care provider if you have questions about the activated charcoal pouch.

Whom To Call With Questions

Call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service with questions. You can find the phone number by visiting:

- **Minnesota:**
pca.state.mn.us
 - Type "household hazardous waste" in the search box.
 - Click on *Find your household hazardous waste collection site - Minnesota Pollution Control Agency* in the search results.
 - Select your county from the drop down menu and click *Go!*
- **Wisconsin:**
dnr.wi.gov
 - Type "health care waste" in the search box.
 - Scroll down and click on DNR contacts under Additional resources.
 - Find the phone number listed for your region.

**Information adapted from the Minnesota Pollution
Control Agency, Solid Waste Management
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of Natural Resources.**



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