



Are You AWA~~R~~_xE?

Proper Disposal of Unused Medications Helps Patients Prevent Misuse and Abuse

FACT:

Three in five teens say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from a parent's medicine cabinet, and more than 50% of people who abused prescription drugs in 2009 and 2010 got them from friends or family for free.

Safely Disposing Unused Prescription Drugs

Encourage patients to prevent accidental or intentional misuse of unwanted medications by disposing of them safely. There are generally three options for patients to safely and legally dispose of unwanted, expired, or unneeded medications:

- 1. Take them to a local medication disposal program, police department drop box, or local medication take-back event.**
Find locations by state by visiting www.AWARERX.ORG and clicking Get Local.
- 2. Take them to a participating collection site on a designated Drug Enforcement Administration National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day.**
- 3. If neither of the above options are available, follow local or Food and Drug Administration guidelines for disposing of unwanted medications in the home. In summary:**
 - Check the label and follow any instructions for safe disposal provided.
 - Do not flush the drugs down the toilet, unless the label says to flush them.
 - If there are no instructions on the label, take the medication out of the container and mix with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or cat litter. Seal the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container that can be disposed of in the home garbage.

Safe Syringe, Sharps, and Lancet Disposal

Safely managing and disposing of household generated sharps reduces pollution to the environment and prevents injury and disease transmission from needle-sticks. Similar to prescription drugs, many states have options available to patients for safe sharps disposal such as drop boxes, hazardous waste sites, mail-back programs, and syringe exchange programs.

If there are no other disposal methods available, inform patients that needles may be safely disposed at home:

- Place used sharps in an empty household container such as a laundry detergent bottle, bleach bottle, or other opaque sturdy container with a screw-top lid.
- Insert the needles point-first, mark the bottle "Do Not Recycle," and store with the cap screwed on.
- When the container is half-full, seal the cap with duct tape and place in the garbage (not recycling). Never place loose needles, syringes, or lancets in the trash.

Due to the injury and health risks it places on garbage facility workers, disposing of needles in the trash is the least desirable method. Although placing sharps in the regular trash may be allowable under state rule, some municipalities prohibit this disposal method or require special notification and instructions. Please check with the local government before advising patients to use this method.

In California, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Wisconsin, it is illegal to dispose of needles in the trash.

AWAR_xE is a consumer protection program provided by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy Foundation®.

For more information, please visit www.AWARERX.ORG.