

## **Disposal of Medications**

### **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers**

**FAQ:** Does the BJACH Pharmacy have a medication or prescription “Take-Back” program?

**Answer:** No. The BJACH Pharmacy does not have a program for routine “take-back” of medications, prescriptions, used syringes/needles, or sharps containers. Refer to the SMARxT Disposal **brochure** and website ([www.smartdisposal.net](http://www.smartdisposal.net)) for tips on safe home disposal of medications.

Under special circumstances the BJACH director of pharmacy can authorize limited take-back of certain medications, but the pharmacy is forbidden by Federal Law to take-back any controlled substance medications.

**FAQ:** What should I do with medications, including prescription medications, in my house that are not being used anymore?

**Answer:** Safely discard all medications that are no longer needed. All “leftover” medications from old injuries, old infections, medication changes, and plain excess should be safely discarded. Leftover medications pose a risk to everyone who comes into a household – from children, to the elderly, to the visitor who wants to use your restroom. Improve the safety of your house by inspecting and purging your medication storage areas (medicine cabinet, bathroom & kitchen pantries, etc.) every few months and discard any prescription medication that is not being used.

**FAQ:** What’s the best way to discard prescription medications?

**Answer:** *Above all else, the method you choose to discard medications must be safe for you and for those in your household.* Flushing medications down the toilet used to be the most recommended method for disposal of medications, but flushing medications into the sewer system may be harmful to the local environment. Determining the “best” method of disposal depends on the type of medication to be discarded and on household risks (children, pets, etc.).

Almost all medicines can be thrown away in the household trash after mixing them with some unpalatable substance (e.g., coffee grounds, used cat litter, etc.) and sealing them in a container. See 4-step instructions below.

However, certain medicines, like powerful pain relievers, may be especially harmful and, in some cases, fatal in a single dose if they are used by someone other than the person the medicine was prescribed for. For this reason, some medicines should be flushed down the toilet after the medicine is no longer needed so that they cannot be

accidentally used by children, pets, or anybody else. See below for a list of “FLUSH ONLY” medications.

#### **4-Step Instructions for Disposal of Unused Medications In Household Trash.**

When discarding unused medications, ensure you protect children and pets from potentially negative effects:

- 1. Pour medication into a sealable plastic bag. If medication is a solid (pill, liquid capsule, etc.), add water to dissolve it.**
- 2. Add kitty litter, sawdust, coffee grounds (or any material that mixes with the medication and makes it less appealing for pets and children to eat) to the plastic bag.**
- 3. Seal the plastic bag and put it in the trash.**
- 4. Remove and destroy ALL identifying personal information (prescription label) from all medication containers before recycling them or throwing them away.**

**FAQ:** Can you give me an example of situations where it is safer to flush medications and an example of where discarding medications in the trash is best?

**Answer, Example 1:** You wish to discard leftover prescriptions that are 4 months old, including a pain reliever (like Percocet) and an antibiotic (like amoxicillin). You and your wife live in your own home with two children aged 2 and 6 years old, and you have a new puppy. In this case, THE BEST disposal method is the method that is safe for the entire family.

1. Percocet is a powerful pain medication that may cause serious harm to young children and animals. This medication should be flushed down the toilet.
2. The antibiotic may not be as dangerous as Percocet, but with small children and pets in the house, it may be safer to flush the medication than to dispose of it in the trash.

**Answer, Example 2:** You are visiting your elderly mother and father at their home. They have a bunch of old medications that they don't need any more. The prescriptions are all several years old, and none of them are on the “FLUSH ONLY” list. Your parents have two cats around the house and six grandchildren who are always supervised when they visit. They asked you to help them discard these unused medications.

1. This is an example where safe disposal in household garbage/trash should be strongly considered as an alternative to flushing into the sewer.
2. To safely discard these medications follow the 4-step instructions below.

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3. **Seal the plastic bag and put it in the trash.**
4. **Remove and destroy ALL identifying personal information (prescription label) from all medication containers before recycling them or throwing them away.**

#### **FLUSH ONLY Medications (see list in table, below)**

##### ***Why do the medications on the list have flushing directions for disposal?***

The medicines on this list are safe and effective when used as prescribed, but they could be especially harmful to a child, pet, or anyone else if taken accidentally. Some of the possible harmful effects include breathing difficulties or heart problems, possibly leading to death. For these reasons, FDA advises that flushing these medicines down the sink or toilet is currently the best way to immediately and permanently remove the risk of harm from the home.

##### ***Does flushing the medicines on the list down the toilet or sink drain pose a risk to human health and the environment?***

We are aware of recent reports that have noted trace amounts of medicines in the water system. The majority of medicines found in the water system are a result of the body's natural routes of drug elimination (in urine or feces). Scientists, to date, have found no evidence of harmful effects to human health from medicines in the environment. Disposal of these select, few medicines by flushing contributes only a small fraction of the total amount medicine found in the water. FDA believes that any potential risk to people and the environment from flushing this small, select list of medicines is outweighed by the real possibility of life-threatening risks from accidental ingestion of these medicines.

#### **MEDICINES RECOMMENDED FOR DISPOSAL BY FLUSHING**

This list from FDA tells you what unused or expired medicines you should flush down the sink or toilet to help prevent danger to people and pets in the home. Flushing these medicines will get rid of them right away and help keep your family and pets safe. FDA continually evaluates medicines for safety risks and will update the list as needed.

<b>Medicine</b>	<b>Active Ingredient</b>
<b>Actiq</b> , oral transmucosal lozenge *	Fentanyl Citrate
<b>Avinza</b> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Daytrana</b> , transdermal patch system	Methylphenidate
<b>Demerol</b> , tablets *	Meperidine Hydrochloride
<b>Demerol</b> , oral solution *	Meperidine Hydrochloride
<b>Diastat/Diastat AcuDial</b> , rectal gel	Diazepam
<b>Dilaudid</b> , tablets *	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Dilaudid</b> , oral liquid *	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Dolophine Hydrochloride</b> , tablets *	Methadone Hydrochloride
<b>Duragesic</b> , patch (extended release) *	Fentanyl
<b>Embeda</b> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate; Naltrexone Hydrochloride
<b>Exalgo</b> , tablets (extended release)	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Fentora</b> , tablets (buccal)	Fentanyl Citrate
<b>Kadian</b> , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Methadone Hydrochloride</b> , oral solution *	Methadone Hydrochloride
<b>Methadose</b> , tablets *	Methadone Hydrochloride
<b>Morphine Sulfate</b> , tablets (immediate release) *	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Morphine Sulfate</b> , oral solution *	Morphine Sulfate
<b>MS Contin</b> , tablets (extended release) *	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Onsolis</b> , soluble film (buccal)	Fentanyl Citrate
<b>Opana</b> , tablets (immediate release)	Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Opana ER</b> , tablets (extended release)	Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
<b>Oramorph SR</b> , tablets (sustained release)	Morphine Sulfate
<b>Oxycontin</b> , tablets (extended release) *	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<b>Percocet</b> , tablets *	Acetaminophen; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<b>Percodan</b> , tablets *	Aspirin; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
<b>Xyrem</b> , oral solution	Sodium Oxybate

\*These medicines have generic versions available or are only available in generic formulations.