

Safe Disposal of Medications

SafeMedicationUse.ca has received a report from a consumer who had difficulty finding a safe way to dispose of old medicines. This newsletter provides information on how and why to discard medicines safely.

Most medicines have an expiry date on the label. Once the expiry date has passed, a medicine may not be fully effective and should not be used. Taking expired medicines may even cause harm. Everyone should sort through their medicine cabinets at least once a year. Any medicine that has expired and any drugs that are no longer needed should be discarded. It is important to use a safe method of disposal.

In the past, it was common for people to flush old medicines down the sink or throw them in the toilet. Other people would throw old medicines in the garbage. These methods of disposal could be harmful to the environment or could create a danger before garbage pick-up. Proper disposal of medicines protects the environment and also protects children and pets. It also prevents old medicines from falling into the hands of people who might misuse them.

Programs for safe disposal of medicines vary across the country. If you live in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, or Prince Edward Island, you can take advantage of provincial programs. In these programs, certain community pharmacies take back your old medicines and dispose of them in an environmentally safe manner.

In other provinces and territories, programs may be organized through local municipalities. You can also ask if your community pharmacy will accept your expired medicines for disposal.

For more information on how to safely discard your medications in your province or territory, click on the following link: http://www.medicationsreturn.ca/programs_en.php.

Read the updated [It's Your Health - Proper Use and Disposal of Medication](#) published by Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada.