



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

## SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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### Out with the Old: Return Your Used or Out-of-Date Eye and Ear Drops to the Pharmacy

Unused or expired medications should be taken back to the pharmacy for proper disposal. People often know to take left-over and expired pills back to the pharmacy. However, it's less commonly known that other types of medications such as eye and ear drops also have risks if kept in the home for longer than needed. For example, germs can get into the medication bottle once it's been opened, and this can cause harm.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report from a person who had a prescription for antibiotic eye drops. They discovered they were using a family member's leftover eye drops by mistake. These old drops had been left in the medicine cabinet in case they were needed again. After talking with their doctor, the person started taking the newly prescribed drops. Fortunately, their eye infection then cleared up.

#### SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following tips for disposal of eye and ear drops:

- Ask your pharmacist how long you should be using your drops. Some drops are meant to be used for a short time only. Do not keep and reuse these drops later on, as this could lead to an infection. Also, do not share your drops with anyone else.
- Ask how long you can use your drops once the bottle is opened.
- Return partly used or expired eye and ear drops to your pharmacy.
  - Keep the drops in the original bottle. Don't pour the drops into the sink or toilet.
  - Remove the label that shows your name or cover your name with a black marker.

More information about safe disposal of medications is available here:

[Have Unused Medications Overstayed Their Welcome](https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/storagedisposal.html)

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This newsletter was developed in collaboration with Best Medicines Coalition and Patients for Patient Safety Canada.

Recommendations are shared with healthcare providers, through the ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin, so that changes can be made together.

This newsletter shares information about safe medication practices, is noncommercial, and is therefore exempt from Canadian anti-spam legislation.

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