



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

## SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

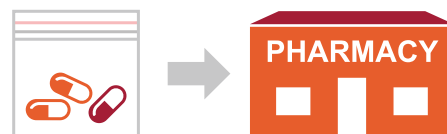
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### Safe Storage and Disposal of Medications during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Medications that are not securely stored can be a danger to children, pets, or visitors. These include medications that are still being used, drugs that are no longer needed, and medications that have passed their expiry. Storing medications safely at home and returning products to the pharmacy when they are no longer needed are important ways to prevent harm. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacies may not be accepting medication returns for disposal, or they may have new ways of taking them back.

**SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following suggestions for consumers about the storage and disposal of medications during the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- Keep your medications out of sight and out of reach of others, especially children, teens, and pets. Even a single dose of some medications can cause serious harm or death.
- Call your pharmacy to ask whether they are accepting medications for disposal. If the answer is yes, place unneeded medications in a clear bag and take them to the pharmacy. Pharmacy staff will help you follow physical distancing and other safety measures when you arrive.
- If your pharmacy is not accepting medications for disposal, ask your pharmacist for advice about disposing of unneeded medications. The pharmacist may suggest options like the following:
  - Safely store the medications in your home until the pharmacy can accept them. For most medications, especially opioids, this means locking the medication away. **Do not throw medications into the garbage.**
  - Take medications to your municipal waste drop-off depot for disposal. Call ahead to make sure this service is available.



**Learn more of what you can do in your home to prevent harm from medications:**

- [Newsletter](https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/storagedisposal.html) (https://safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/storagedisposal.html)
- [Handout](https://www.ismp-canada.org/download/OpioidStewardship/storage-disposal-information.pdf) (https://www.ismp-canada.org/download/OpioidStewardship/storage-disposal-information.pdf)

This information is shared by ISMP Canada and the Health Products Stewardship Association (HPSA), in support of [guidance from Health Canada for pharmacies](#).

#### Medication safety bulletins contribute to Global Patient Safety Alerts.

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.