



## BE SMART

Here are some other suggestions that can help keep you and your family safe from accidental overdose or poisoning:

- Always keep your medicines separate from those of your spouse or other family members. This will make it less likely that you take the wrong ones by mistake.
- Never guess on how much medicine to take. Extra medicine won't make you or your child feel better any faster.
- Good lighting near where you store your medicines will help you make sure you are taking the right medicine. Never take medicines in the dark.
- Read the label before you open the bottle and again before you take or give the medicine to ensure the right dosage is taken.
- Never let young children take medicine by themselves. Avoid calling medicine candy.

Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection

### Prescription Monitoring Program

165 Capitol Avenue, Room 145  
Hartford, CT 06106

(860) 713-6073 • [www.ct.gov/dcp](http://www.ct.gov/dcp)



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# What Parents Need to Know About Prescription Drugs



## Safe Storage and Disposal of Prescription Medication



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## PROPER DISPOSAL OF YOUR MEDICATIONS

Flushing medications down the toilet or sink causes water pollution, impacts drinking water and has adverse effects on septic systems, fish and other aquatic wildlife.

### 1. Keep the medication in its original container.

- Use a permanent marker, duck tape or remove the label to protect your private information

### 2. Make medication less appealing.

- Mix your prescription drugs with hot water to dissolve them. Add an undesirable substance, such as saw dust, coffee grounds or kitty litter.

### 3. Contain and seal.

- Place it inside a container such as an empty yogurt or margarine tub to ensure that the contents cannot be seen and tape it shut.

### 4. Throw out the container in your trash can.

- Do not put the container in your recycling bin!

## GETTING ORGANIZED

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The greatest source of easily available and “free” abusable medications are the billions of prescription pills openly sitting in our medicine cabinets at home.

Some are powerful pain medications that are targets for young people, including strangers, who can take them without you knowing — leading to a nationwide problem of opioid abuse and dependence, overdose and death. Much of this medication is no longer needed in your home.

### Here are a few simple steps to help you organize your medications:

1. Inventory all the medications you have. You should try to do this type of inventory every six months to a year.
2. Check the expiration date on the bottle to ensure the pills have not expired. (Watch expiration dates on eye drops and eardrops, too. They may no longer be effective and, worse, could be a breeding ground for bacteria or fungus.)
3. Look for medications that are discolored, dried out, crumbling, or show other signs that they are past their prime.
4. Look for leftover prescription medications from a previous illness or condition and discard them (see section on “Proper Disposal of Prescription Drugs”).



## STORING MEDICATIONS

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Each medication has unique storage requirements. This is because some medications can become less effective when exposed to air, moisture, cold, heat, or light.

Some prescription medications have strict storage requirements; your pharmacist can help you determine the best way to store these medications.

- Keep medications in their original container.
- Never combine different medications into one bottle.
- Don't store medications in areas that are hot and humid, such as the bathroom medicine cabinet.
- Remove the cotton plug, which attracts moisture, from medication bottles.
- If a medication is required to be stored in the refrigerator, be careful not to store it in the freezer or expose it to extreme moisture.

## LOCK UP YOUR MEDICATIONS

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If there are children around, you might want to find an area in your home where you can lock up all your medications, including those for pets. It's a great idea to store medications in a cabinet, drawer, or tool box with a lock, or purchase childproof lock boxes.

Parents and grandparents should also be aware that one-third of the accidental childhood prescription drug poisoning involve a grandparent's medication. Grandparents often have non-child-resistant prescription vials or loose pills out on tables, kitchen counters, or in purses or pockets.

### Other Helpful Tips:

- Choose child-resistant packaging for prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs and vitamin supplements.
- Check to see which medications need to be refrigerated. Make sure they are stored where they will not freeze and where children cannot easily reach them.