



Safe Medication Disposal

- **Prevent Accidental Poisoning:** Thousands of children are treated in emergency rooms annually for accidentally ingesting medication, making safe disposal crucial to protecting children and pets.
- **Prevent Drug Misuse and Abuse:** Leftover or expired prescriptions, particularly opioids, are easily accessible to family members or teens, fueling prescription drug abuse.
- **Prevent Environmental Damage:** Flushing medications or throwing them in the trash causes chemicals to leach into landfills, soil, and waterways, harming aquatic ecosystems.
- **Reduce Accidental Ingestion of Expired Medication:** Keeping old medicine increases the risk of using ineffective or harmful medication, which is a particular danger for elderly adults.

Best Practices for Disposal:

- **Take-Back Programs:** The best option is to use a local drug take-back program
- **Med-Safe Boxes:** Many pharmacies and law enforcement locations provide secure Med-safe boxes.
- **Disposal in Trash:** If no take-back program is available, mix medicines (do not crush tablets/capsules) with an unappealing substance like cat litter or coffee grounds, place in a sealed container, and throw in the trash.
- **Flushing:** Only flush medications if the label specifically instructs to do so, as this is reserved for highly dangerous medications.

It is important to remove personal information from empty medication bottles before recycling or disposing of them, as they may contain sensitive, personal data.

Medication take-back programs provide a safe, secure, and environmentally responsible way to dispose of unused or expired prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs. Their primary purposes are to prevent drug abuse, avoid accidental poisoning (especially in children/pets), and protect the environment from improper disposal.

Key purposes of these programs include:

- **Preventing Misuse and Addiction:** Removing unused, often addictive, medications (especially opioids) from homes prevents them from being stolen or misused by family members or visitors.
- **Preventing Accidental Poisoning:** Proper disposal reduces the risk of children or pets accidentally ingesting stored, expired, or unwanted medications.
- **Environmental Protection:** These programs prevent drugs from being flushed down the toilet or thrown into the trash, which can lead to contamination of water systems and landfills.
- **Safe Destruction:** Programs provide secure, often anonymous, methods for disposal, such as 24-hour, permanent drop-boxes at pharmacies or police stations, and scheduled national take-back events.

The [Drug Enforcement Administration \(DEA\)](#) hosts national take-back days twice a year to raise awareness, and many communities provide year-round disposal options.

In Durham, you can responsibly dispose of expired or unused medications at several permanent, free drop-box locations, including the [Durham County Sheriff's Office](#), local police headquarters, and select pharmacies like CVS or Walgreens. These sites accept pills, capsules, and sometimes liquids for safe, anonymous disposal.

Permanent Medication Drop-Box Locations in Durham

- **Durham County Sheriff's Office (Courthouse):** 510 South Dillard St.
- **Durham County Sheriff's Office North Station:** 11821 U.S. Highway 501, Rougemont.
- **Durham Police Headquarters:** 505 West Chapel Hill St.
- **Durham Police District #2:** 5285 North Roxboro Road.
- **Durham Police District #3:** #8 Consultant Place (Shannon Road).
- **Durham County Human Services Building:** 414 East Main St (front entrance).
- **Walgreens Pharmacy:** 6405 Fayetteville Rd.

Important Tips

- **What to bring:** Prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, and pet medications.
- **Items usually NOT accepted:** Needles/sharps, liquids (at some sites), and aerosol sprays. However for **Durham County Takeback Events** DO accept needles/sharps, liquids and aerosol sprays.

- **Take Back Days:** The Durham County Department of Public Health participates in national take-back events in April and October. For more information, call 919-560-7765.

Alternative Disposal

- **Mail-Back Envelopes:** Some pharmacies offer prepaid mail-back envelopes for unused medication.
- **Household Disposal:** If no drop-box is available, mix medicines with coffee grounds or cat litter, place in a sealed bag, and throw in the household trash. Remove personal information from empty containers.

