

# Saturday is national prescription drug take-back day

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DEA urges Americans to dispose of painkillers and other unused meds at sites nationwide.

(HealthDay)—Do you have any expired or unused prescription medicines cluttering up your medicine cabinet? You can get rid of them safely and quickly at sites across the United States during National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on Saturday.

The free and anonymous service will be available at thousands of locations across the United States, with collection sites open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. local time, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) said in a news release.

Soaring rates of abuse of prescription drugs—especially painkillers such as Oxycontin and Vicodin—are a key reason for the annual event. Abuse

rates in the United States are alarmingly high, the DEA said, with 6.8 million Americans abusing prescription drugs—nearly twice as many as those using cocaine, heroin, inhalants and hallucinogens combined.

Studies also show that most abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including those lifted from home medicine cabinets.

During the six previous drug take-back days, people turned in nearly 2.8 million pounds of [prescription drugs](#), the DEA said. Last year, more than 5,800 collection sites were operated by more than 4,300 of the agency's law enforcement partners.

To find a collection site near you during this year's event, you can go to the [DEA website](#) or call 1-800-882-9539.

One expert said Prescription Drug Take-Back Day targets a very important issue.

"The abuse of [prescription medication](#) is one of the biggest drug problems in the United States today," said Sheila Brocavich, an assistant clinical professor in the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at St. John's University in New York City.

"It's very important for parents to talk with the kids in their lives about the danger of abusing prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and by safeguarding and properly disposing of unused medications," Brocavich said in a university news release.

Brocavich offered some tips to help prevent prescription-drug abuse:

- Keep medicines in a locked cabinet in the bedroom or linen closet. They should be labeled and in their original containers. If you use medication organizers, keep those secured too.

- Take an inventory of your medications so you know what you have and dispose of drugs you no longer need. Pain medications should be either flushed down the toilet, turned in to a take-back program or placed in medication-return mailers available at pharmacies. Controlled substances should be flushed or turned into a take-back program.
- If you throw [prescription medicines](#) in the garbage, mix them with kitty litter or coffee grounds and put them in the garbage on the day of trash pickup.
- Never tell children their medicine is like candy, and warn them not to share medicine.
- Changes in children's behavior or grades can be a sign of drug abuse. If you discover that your children have loose medication, take it to the pharmacy for identification or look it up on a drug-identification website.

**More information:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more about how to dispose of [unused medications](#).

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