

What You Should Know About Using Prescription Drugs Safely

Prescription drugs can help heal workplace injuries, but they can only help if they are taken properly. Medicines may work differently on different people. This depends on gender, age, weight, medical history, or other factors. There is no way to know for sure what side effects, if any, you may experience from a medicine. That is why you should give your doctor or health care provider as much information as you can about yourself and your medical history.

Talk to your health care provider before AND after you start taking your medicine. Your health care provider can predict and manage any side effects you might have. Only you and your health care provider can decide if a medicine is right for you.

If you feel like you may have a dependency or addiction to a prescription drug, please call the Texas Department of State Health Services, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division at the toll-free telephone number: 1-877-966-3784. They can provide immediate and confidential help, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNUSED MEDICINES

Is your medicine cabinet filled with expired drugs or medications you no longer use? Most drugs can be thrown in the household trash, but consumers should take certain precautions before tossing them out according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). A few drugs should be flushed down the toilet.

Guidelines for Drug Disposal:

The federal guidelines for proper disposal of prescription drugs are summarized here:

1. Follow any specific disposal instructions on the drug label or patient information that accompanies the medication. Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet unless this information specifically instructs you to do so. About a dozen drugs, such as powerful narcotic pain relievers and other controlled substances, carry instructions for flushing to reduce the danger of unintentional use or overdose and illegal abuse.
2. If no instructions are given, throw the drugs in the household trash, but first:
 - Take them out of their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or cat litter. The medication will be less appealing to children and pets, and unrecognizable to people who may intentionally go through your trash.
 - Put them in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container to prevent the medication from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.
 - Take advantage of community drug take-back programs that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. Call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service (see blue pages in phone book) to see if a take-back program is available in your community.

Additional Tips on the Proper Disposal of Prescription Drugs:

- Before throwing out a medicine container, scratch out all identifying information on the prescription label to make it unreadable. This will help protect your identity and the privacy of your personal health information.
- Do not give medications to friends or family. Doctors prescribe drugs based on a person's specific symptoms and medical history. A drug that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.
- When in doubt about proper disposal, talk to your pharmacist.

