

# Bottles and Bottles of Meds

## Organizing and Storing Medications

Living alone or with any number of people, keeping medications safe and accessible can become a challenge.

As there are a number of ways to hold order with small items, always decide on the one that is easiest for everyone in a household to use and maintain. Small drawers may not be easy for very young or older individuals. Snap lock lids might be the most practical I have found.



There are a lots of obvious ways to sort your medication and health care items. If you are dealing with lots of prescribed medication, make sure you have a cool, dry place to store the containers. Labelling is an absolute must. Keeping them out of reach of children is a must (that goes for over-the-counter meds as well). If you can, designate a shelf or two in your linen cabinet or pantry.

Daily used medication should be kept handy but out of sight. Use a large enough container that can hold all bottles you use to refill reminder cases. If you don't care about reminder cases, use

color-coding on the caps for time of day reminders (e.g., magic markers, stick-on dots). If you choose to keep your meds on your kitchen counter or another open space, use a container tall enough to hide the bottles standing up in it. I have helped clients finding appropriate containers, such as wooden salad bowls (the ones with flat bottoms), photo storage boxes, or desktop utility boxes.

## Medicine Cabinets

Medicine cabinets often hold a huge variety of personal items and are not meant for medicines (other than first aid). If your bathroom has such a cabinet, it should hold only what you use daily, or what you may need quickly in an emergency. The quickest way to rethink your medicine cabinet is to first empty its contents—sorting them as you do so--and wipe down shelves. Toss anything that's expired, useless, or wrecked.



Sort by personal hygiene and first aid items.

Adjusting shelf levels to create ample room for your tallest items, like shaving cream, hair products, and toothbrushes. (Keeping toothbrushes upright behind closed doors is more sanitary.)

Use lower shelves for essentials (makeup remover, contact-lens solution) and move occasionals up top.

Use magnetic strips to hold small metal items, such as nail scissors.

Give cotton swabs and cotton balls small containers and refill as necessary.



Keep bandages and ointments together so that you're ready for an emergency.

#### Keeping Track and Taking Your Medications

Make sure your insurance information is accompanied by a list of medications you are currently taking. Update every time any of your prescriptions changes. Include the time of day you are taking them.

Taking daily medicines can be tricky, especially when different times than just morning are prescribed. Reminder boxes are really the best way to make sure that you don't have to question yourself. Keep a master list of your meds with all your refill bottles and

reorder in time. Use your phone to remind you for reorders or, best yet, make your reorder automatic and make sure the pharmacy texts you when the order is ready to be picked up.

## Info finding

Of course, the internet is the easiest way to get detailed information on medications you are taking or consider taking:

Any search engine will list numerous sites when looking for "information on medications"

[www.drugs.com](http://www.drugs.com) - Information, interactions, identifier

[www.webmd.com/drugs/index-drugs.aspx](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/index-drugs.aspx) - answer your medical questions on OTC, RX, and vitamins

[www.rxlist.com](http://www.rxlist.com) - information, identifier, interactions, pharmacy locator

[www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov) - National Library of Medicine

The next most reliable source would be your pharmacist. And, always ask your medical provider questions before agreeing to any prescribed medication.

## Disposing

### Medicine Take-Back Programs

Medicine take-back programs for disposal are a good way to remove expired, unwanted, or unused medicines from the home and reduce the chance that others may accidentally take the medicine. Contact your city or county government's household trash and recycling service to see if there is a medicine take-back program in your community and learn about any special rules regarding which medicines can be taken back. You can also talk to your pharmacist to see if he or she knows of other medicine disposal programs in your area or search for "National Prescription Drug Take-Back Events".

## Disposal in Household Trash

If no medicine take-back program is available in your area, you can also follow these simple steps to dispose of most medicines in the household trash

Mix medicines (do NOT crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds;

Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag; and

Throw the container in your household trash.

Before throwing out your empty pill bottle or other empty medicine packaging, remember to scratch out all information on the prescription label to make it unreadable.

## Flushing of Certain Medicines

There is a small number of medicines that may be especially harmful and, in some cases, fatal with just one dose if they are used by someone other than the person for whom the medicine was prescribed. To prevent accidental ingestion by children, pets, or anyone else, a few medicines have specific disposal instructions indicating they should be flushed down the sink or toilet as soon as they are no longer needed, and when they cannot be disposed of through a medicine take-back program. You may have received disposal directions for these medicines when you picked up your prescription.

### *Medicines Recommended for Disposal by Flushing*

This list from FDA tells you what expired, unwanted, or unused medicines you should flush down the sink or toilet to help prevent danger to people and pets in the home. Flushing these medicines will get rid of them right away and help keep your family and pets safe.

Medicines recommended for disposal by flushing:

- **Abstral**, tablets (sublingual)-Fentanyl
- **Actiq**, oral transmucosal lozenge \*-Fentanyl Citrate
- **Avinza**, capsules (extended release)-Morphine Sulfate
- **Buprenorphine Hydrochloride**, tablets (sublingual) \*-Buprenorphine Hydrochloride
- **Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride**, tablets (sublingual) \*-Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride
- **Butrans**, transdermal patch system-Buprenorphine
- **Daytrana**, transdermal patch system-Methylphenidate
- **Demerol**, tablets \*-Meperidine Hydrochloride
- **Demerol**, oral solution \*-Meperidine Hydrochloride
- **Diastat/Diastat AcuDial**, rectal gel-Diazepam
- **Dilaudid**, tablets \*-Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
- **Dilaudid**, oral liquid \*-Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
- **Dolophine Hydrochloride**, tablets \*-Methadone Hydrochloride
- **Duragesic**, patch (extended release)\*-Fentanyl
- **Embeda**, capsules (extended release)-Morphine Sulfate; Naltrexone Hydrochloride
- **Exalgo**, tablets (extended release)-Hydromorphone Hydrochloride

- **Fentora**, tablets (buccal)-Fentanyl Citrate
- **Hysingla ER**, tablets (extended release)-Hydrocodone Bitartrate
- **Kadian**, capsules (extended release)-Morphine Sulfate
- **Methadone Hydrochloride**, oral solution \*-Methadone Hydrochloride
- **Methadose**, tablets \*-Methadone Hydrochloride
- **Morphine Sulfate**, tablets (immediate release) \*-Morphine Sulfate
- **Morphine Sulfate**, oral solution \*-Morphine Sulfate
- **MS Contin**, tablets (extended release) \*-Morphine Sulfate
- **Nucynta ER**, tablets (extended release)-Tapentadol
- **Onsolis**, soluble film (buccal)-Fentanyl Citrate
- **Opana**, tablets (immediate release)-Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
- **Opana ER**, tablets (extended release)-Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
- **Oxecta**, tablets (immediate release)-Oxycodone Hydrochloride
- **Oxycodone Hydrochloride**, capsules-Oxycodone Hydrochloride
- **Oxycodone Hydrochloride**, oral solution-Oxycodone Hydrochloride
- **Oxycontin**, tablets (extended release)-Oxycodone Hydrochloride
- **Percocet**, tablets \*-Acetaminophen; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
- **Percodan**, tablets \*-Aspirin; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
- **Suboxone**, film (sublingual)-Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride
- **Xartemis XR**, tablets-Oxycodone Hydrochloride; Acetaminophen
- **Xyrem**, oral solution-Sodium Oxybate
- **Zohydro ER**, capsules (extended release)-Hydrocodone Bitartrate
- **Zubsolv**, tablets (sublingual)-Buprenorphine Hydrochloride; Naloxone Hydrochloride

\*These medicines have generic versions available or are only available in generic formulations.

Or go to [www.disposemy meds.org](http://www.disposemy meds.org) to get current information.