

Virginia Board of Pharmacy

Guidelines for Provision of Counseling and Information by Pharmacists regarding Proper Disposal of Unused Dispensed Drugs

Pursuant to [Chapter 114 of the 2017 Acts of Assembly](#), the Board developed the following guidelines for the provision of counseling and information regarding proper disposal of unused dispensed drugs. It is recommended that pharmacists verbally counsel or provide written information on the importance of proper storage and disposal of unused dispensed drugs to patients or their agents that receive drugs in Schedule II-V and any drugs of concern.

Drug Storage:

Properly securing prescription drugs can decrease the risk of diversion of drugs from the medicine cabinet, a common method for obtaining drugs for abuse. Tips on safe storage may be accessed in the Medication Safety Tips flyer at <https://www.upandaway.org/>

Disposal Options:

- **Authorized pharmacy disposal site or collection site** – if the pharmacy is an authorized collection site as listed at <http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/pharmacy/destructionsites.asp>, the pharmacist should inform the patient of how to dispose of the unused drugs via the collection box at the pharmacy.
- **Collection boxes at local law enforcement agencies** – encourage patients to use a collection box for drug destruction at a local law enforcement agency, if applicable.
- **Drug take-back programs** – pharmacists should encourage patients to take their unused drugs for destruction to take-back programs organized by local, state, or federal government agencies.
- **Drug deactivation or disposal pouches** – pharmacists are encouraged to educate patients on the use of drug deactivation or disposal pouches and how to obtain them for purchase or free of charge for disposing of unwanted medications. The unwanted medications are placed in the pouch which deactivates the medication and renders the drug safe for landfills.
- **Home disposal** – if an authorized collection site or take-back program is not available, home disposal is a viable option despite the risk of diversion and environmental contamination.
 - **Step 1** – Remove medications from their original containers. If the medication is solid, crush it or add water to dissolve it and then mix the medication with an undesirable substance, such as kitty litter or coffee grounds. This makes the mixture unattractive to children and pets and unrecognizable to potential abusers who may go through your trash.
 - **Step 2** – Place the mixture in a container with a lid or in a sealable baggie to prevent the medication from leaking, and throw it into the trash.

- **Step 3** – When discarding the original containers, scratch out or remove identifiers on the bottle and/or packaging.
- Caution patients not to dispose of medications in the toilet or sink unless specifically instructed to on the label, and not to give medicine to friends or family. This is not only potentially illegal, but a drug that works for the patient could be dangerous for someone else.
- For more information on home disposal, refer patients to FDA’s *Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know* found at <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm>

Additional Resources

- Tips, educational flyers, and pharmacist resources on disposal – <https://nabp.pharmacy/initiatives/awarxe/dispose-safely/>