

# Safe Disposal of Home Generated Medicine and Sharps



## Did you know?

- Every 14 minutes, an American dies from an unintentional drug overdose.
- Seven out of 10 people who abuse prescription drugs get them from friends or family members.
- Among children, emergency room visits for accidental drug poisonings are twice as common as poisonings for other household products (e.g., cleaning solutions).
- Flushing leftover medicines sends them into our rivers, streams, and waterways because wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove them.

Source: The Product Stewardship Institute, Inc

## Pharmaceutical Collection Locations

### Best Option - Drop Boxes



Many non-controlled prescription medications (medicines with NO known abuse potential) may be returned to Iowa pharmacies participating in the Iowa Pharmacy Association's "EcoReturns" program. There are over 400 pharmacies in the state that collect medications in their community. These programs can take back any unused, expired non-controlled prescription or over the counter medications. There is a [EcoReturns Locations tool](#) for these sites.

More than 50 community pharmacies and local Iowa law enforcement centers have established permanent collection boxes for controlled substances, and the number of sites is growing. At these sites, unused, expired controlled medications such as Adderall, Vicodin, Morphine, etc. as well as other prescription and over the counter medications may be disposed of in these collection boxes and then properly destroyed. There is a [list of Prescription Drug Take Back sites](#) available.

### Better Option – DEA Take Back Days

Although you may have to wait, twice each year, on a Saturday in the Spring and Fall, law enforcement agencies team up with local pharmacies and other organizations in over 100 Iowa communities to sponsor a special one-day collection of unused medicines. Details typically are provided closer to the dates of these events, but general information is available at the DEA's Website.

For more information on the National Take-Back Initiative, visit the [DEA's website](#).



Iowa Department of Natural Resources 515/725-8200

## LAST Option – Toss it in the Trash

When better options are not practical, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends you carefully discard of medicines as follows:

\*The DNR does not encourage flushing of medications down the toilet except as a last option.



Follow these simple steps to dispose of medicines in the household trash

**MIX**  
Mix medicines (do not crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as dirt, cat litter, or used coffee grounds;

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

**THROW**  
Throw the container in your household trash;

**SCRATCH OUT**  
Scratch out all personal information on the prescription label of your empty pill bottle or empty medicine packaging to make it unreadable, then dispose of the container.

## How to Dispose of Used Sharps -

Needles, syringes, injection devices, and lancets are all types of medical implements known “sharps.” The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that each year, 8 million people across the country use more than 3 billion needles, syringes and lancets (also called sharps) to manage medical conditions at home. Home-generated sharps must be properly managed to prevent injury by unintentional sticks or disease transmission. People at the greatest risk of being stuck by used sharps include sanitation and sewage treatment workers, janitors and housekeepers, and children.

Do not store used sharps in:

- glass bottles
- soda bottles
- milk jugs
- aluminum cans
- coffee cans

➤ DON'T throw loose needles and other sharps into the trash.

➤ DON'T flush needles and other sharps down the toilet.

➤ DON'T put needles and other sharps in your recycling bin – they are NOT recyclable.

There are many places that will accept used sharps for proper disposal. Please call ahead as there may be acceptance criteria. There is also a list of [Household Disposal of Sharps sites](#).

**REMEMBER: NEVER PLACE  
LOOSE NEEDLES IN THE TRASH!**



Iowa Department of Natural Resources 515/725-8200