

NEW SAFE DISPOSAL OPTIONS!

Drug take-back bins let you safely dispose of unwanted, unneeded, or expired medications



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Learn what can happen if medications are disposed of in the trash or flushed down a drain





SNAPSHOT OF CALIFORNIA OPIOID USE

Opioid prescriptions in California are decreasing, thanks to a concentrated effort to fight this crisis. But a lot of work still needs to be done.

Drug-related overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. More than three out of five drug overdose deaths involve an opioid.

But the numbers don't stop there. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for every person who dies of an opioid overdose...

12 people are admitted to a treatment program

25 are seen for complications in an emergency department

105 report opioid addiction or dependence

659 report using opioids for non-medical or non-prescribed purposes

In 2018, health officials tallied these opioid-related statics

California

2,428 deaths

8,832 emergency department visits

19.8 million prescriptions

Alpine County

0 deaths

0 emergency department visits

218 prescriptions

El Dorado County

7 deaths

48 emergency department visits

149,105 prescriptions

Lassen County

4 deaths

14 emergency department visits

21,382 prescriptions

Modoc County

0 deaths

1 emergency department visit

6,567 prescriptions

Mono County

0 deaths

0 emergency department visits
4,242 prescriptions

Nevada County

7 deaths

31 emergency department visits

79,491 prescriptions

Placer County

8 deaths

83 emergency department visits

269,509 prescriptions

Plumas County

2 deaths

1 emergency department visit

16,062 prescriptions

Sierra County

0 deaths

1 emergency department visit

1,523 prescriptions

Siskiyou County

2 deaths

16 emergency department visits

40,582 prescriptions

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

Learn how and why disposing of unused medication is important—and easy

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

We have all had the experience: Maybe your spouse didn't need the painkillers prescribed for recovery from surgery; maybe your teenager didn't use all of his acne medication because of side effects; maybe your elderly grandparent passed away, leaving a shoe box filled with prescription drugs.

are thrown away in a garbage can, it is still possible that they may be illegally diverted. If drugs are flushed down a toilet or washed down the sink, they may end up in our landfills and waterways, harming wildlife and entering our drinking water.

Fortunately, there is an easy answer: Medication

Product Stewardship Council and its authors, State Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson and Assemblymembers Phil Ting and Adam Gray. In fact, statistics from up and down the state show that medication bins can result in a significant reduction in opioid deaths when bins are put in place.

"We started using bins four years ago (and) they have been extremely helpful for our area," says James Wilson, health education coordinator for Plumas County Public Health.

"Between 2009 and 2015, we had the highest rate of prescription opioid deaths in the state. With this program—along with naloxone availability, MAT and syringe take-back—we've seen a significant drop in death rates."

Hosting a bin through this program is easy and free—installation, maintenance, disposal and promotion. Bins can be placed in pharmacies, hospitals and law enforcement agencies. People disposing of medications in these bins can also remain anonymous—no need to talk to anyone or answer any questions.

And best of all, the drugs are ultimately incinerated at a waste energy facility and converted to renewable energy, a complete win-win.

"Between 2009 and 2015, we had the highest rate of prescription opioid deaths in the state."

James Wilson,
health education coordinator, Plumas County Public Health

Where do you get rid of them safely?

And safely is the operative word here, because unused medications that are not disposed of properly can cause a myriad of serious public safety concerns.

For example, if unused medications stay in your medicine cabinet, they can fall into the hands of a child or teenager, who could accidentally overdose or begin an addiction. Criminals searching for drugs, especially opioids, may come into your house posing as a prospective homebuyer—or attempt a break-in.

If unused medications

Take-Back Bins. These bins are safe and convenient disposal options for prescription and over-the-counter medications.

These convenient bins are a part of the California Statewide Drug Take-Back Program, which was funded by a \$3 million grant from the Department of Health Care Services, and—specifically—its Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program aimed at combating the opioid crisis. This is a prelude to the statewide bill, Senate Bill 212, which was signed into law by then-Gov. Jerry Brown on Sept. 30, 2018. SB 212 was a year-long effort by the California

KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE AND CLEAN

Medication take-back bins provide easy disposal options

BY ANNE STOKES

Along with the power to heal, medications also have the potential to cause harm when misused or improperly discarded. Drug take-back bins provide safe and convenient ways to keep unused medications out of the environment and out of the hand of those who would misuse them.

"It's a critical service that is provided to communities so that consumers have

DON'T RUSH TO FLUSH

Even in the recent past, people were advised to flush unused medications down the drain. Unfortunately, most wastewater treatment facilities can't remove these drugs.

"Some people will flush them down the toilet and we know now that what's happening is that traces of pharmaceuticals are winding up in our waterways," Rogers says.

medications. Those medications also pose a risk to children and teens. Two-thirds of teens who admit to abusing painkillers say they got them out of home medicine cabinets. And each year, approximately 50,000 children under age 5 end up in emergency departments because of accidental poisoning.

"It could end up in the hands of teens or youth or other people who are going to misuse them," Rogers says. "There are so many issues with overdosing these days, so it's important not to keep them lying around and safely dispose of unneeded or expired medications."

A BETTER OPTION

Rogers says that one of the biggest obstacles to using medication take-back bins is simply the public's lack of awareness that such a resource exists.

"It's important to get the information out there about where people can dispose of it, not everybody knows," she says. "It's important for people to not only safely dispose of medications, but to also know where folks can get help if they're struggling with any kind of addiction or abuse."

To find a med bin near you, visit www.takebackdrugs.org.

"It's a critical service that is provided to communities so that consumers have a safe place to dispose of their medications."

Shelley Rogers
Coalition program director, Granite Wellness Centers

a safe place to dispose of their medications," says Shelley Rogers, coalition program director of Granite Wellness Centers, a member organization of the Placer Nevada County Rx Drug Safety Coalition. "Most people really appreciate having an option to safely dispose of them and most people want to keep medications out of the hands of youth or others who may misuse them."

This means what gets flushed down the toilet pollutes the same watersheds that often supply communities' drinking water.

NOT GETTING RID OF UNUSED MEDICATIONS HAS ITS RISKS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 130 Americans die daily from opioid overdoses. In 2017, 36% of those opioid-related deaths involved prescription



WHAT GOES IN THE BINS?

- ▶ Prescription medications
- ▶ Over-the-counter medications
- ▶ Medicated ointments and lotions
- ▶ Pet medications



If possible, transfer pills into a zipped plastic bag before placing in the bin.



Leave medicated ointments and lotions tightly sealed in the original containers.



Obscure any personal information.



WHAT DOESN'T GO IN THE BIN:

- ▶ Cannabis
- ▶ Illegal controlled substances (heroin, LSD, etc.)
- ▶ Medical sharps and needles
- ▶ Auto-injectors (such as EpiPen®)
- ▶ Iodine-containing medications
- ▶ Mercury thermometers
- ▶ Radiopharmaceuticals
- ▶ Chemotherapy or cytotoxic medications
- ▶ Compressed cylinders or aerosols (such as asthma inhalers)
- ▶ Vitamins and dietary supplements
- ▶ Business medical waste (waste from hospitals, clinics or medical, dental and veterinary practices)

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH UNUSED

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Don't store them at home



- ✖ Those drugs may be taken by young children
- ✖ Or stolen by teens, family members, or visitors
- ✖ Which can lead to accidental overdoses



Don't flush them down the toilet



- ✖ Waste water treatment plants cannot remove drugs
- ✖ Leading to contamination of our streams, rivers, and lakes
- ✖ Which is harmful to animals, plants, and people



DON'T LEAVE DRUGS FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO TAKE

More than $\frac{1}{2}$

More than half of all American adults take at least one prescription medication daily, with even more medications prescribed that are never taken.

7 out of 10



In California, 7 out of 10 opioid-related overdose deaths are due to prescription drugs.

DRUGS?

Putting your unused or unwanted medications in a drug take-back bin is the safest and most environmentally protective way to dispose of them.



Don't throw them in the trash



- ✖ These drugs may be taken out of the trash by others
- ✖ Which can lead to illegal use or sale
- ✖ Which fuels the opioid epidemic



Drop them off in a drug take-back bin



- ✓ You can discard of your drugs safely, conveniently, and anonymously
- ✓ They are completely destroyed through thermal destruction
- ✓ Therefore, they will not enter the environment

9.9 million

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an estimated 9.9 million Americans misuse controlled prescription drugs each year. The study showed the majority of abused prescription drugs were obtained from family and friends, often from the home medicine cabinet and without their knowledge.

9,000



Nearly 9,000 emergency room visits in California annually are attributed to opioid drug overdoses.

'WE'LL HAVE A BIN IN EVERY COMMUNITY'

Making disposal of unwanted, unneeded medications easy for rural county

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

California leads the nation in addressing issues that are vital to the public health and safety, and the environment. One crucial piece is the California Statewide Drug Take-Back Program, funded by the California Department of Health Care Services and administered by the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC).

The program targets the opioid crisis and the mishandling of other controlled and over-the-counter drugs. At its heart is a statewide network of Medication Take-Back Bins, placed in law-enforcement agencies, pharmacies and hospitals for public use.

Anyone can anonymously deposit unused and expired medications into the bins, rather than endanger the environment and possibly lives by stockpiling them at home, flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash. The discarded drugs are incinerated at waste-to-renewable-energy plants.

In one way or another, thousands

of people across California touch this chain of events, including Lt. Darrell Frost of the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office in Yreka.

He was assigned to expand the fledgling take-back bin program five years ago. Working with grants

is finalized in the town of McCloud, "We'll have a bin in every community. They really help people have an avenue to get rid of medications without doing something silly like throwing them away."

As a former ambulance medic, Lt.

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Lt. Darrell Frost
Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office

from CPSC and county agencies, he managed to place 13 bins around Siskiyou County.

"I've taken it to heart and stayed on it hot and heavy, getting bins out to every area of our county," he says. Soon, when a pending bin placement

Frost has seen first-hand the tragic results of "the unbelievable amount of prescription meds that are out there," he says.

That's one motive for his deep involvement in the biannual Drug Enforcement Administra-



sponsored Prescription Drug Take Back Day. Between that and his bin program, thousands of pounds of pharmaceuticals are collected throughout Siskiyou County each year.

Additionally, Lt. Frost has fostered education and environmental awareness in various roles over the past 20 years, "So people don't put this stuff in the water supply or in landfills," he says.

He is also a member-trainer with Siskiyou Against Rx Addiction, an opioid safety coalition, and hosts law-enforcement seminars on Narcan training for opioid overdose.

"Either be a champion for helping people or sit back and watch it happen around you," he says. "It's what you do for your community."

For more information:
www.takebackdrugs.org



FIGHT THE OPIOID CRISIS

128 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose, says the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

45% of drug overdoses are estimated to be opioid-related. In California, that's more than **2,400 deaths** each year.

Millions of Americans are addicted to opioids, such as hydrocodone, morphine, and oxycodone. Abuse of these powerful painkillers takes a toll that goes far beyond individuals and their families.

\$78.5 billion represents the annual economic burden of opioid abuse, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This includes health care, treatment, law enforcement, and lost productivity.

Many people who misuse opioids get them from a friend or relative — often without that person's knowledge. By removing the risk of unused opioids in your home, you can help address the devastating opioid crisis affecting so many American families.

Proper disposal of unused prescription opioids saves lives.

CONVENIENT ANSWER TO COMMON PROBLEM

How take-back bins can help your county's health and welfare

BY ANNE STOKES

Take-back bins prevent unused medications from being misused and keeps them from polluting the environment. We talked to Anthony Hill, programs director with the Sierra Community Medical Foundation, to understand how bins keep communities healthy.

How do medication take-back bins benefit the communities they're in?

Essentially, it's a safety matter. It's also an environmental cleanliness matter and a crime-prevention matter because it's keeping people from having to [dispose of] medications in places it should not go.

The bins are needed so that people who have these medications have a safe waste disposal environment that's managed properly. If not, then you're dealing with pills being thrown away in normal garbage, which is unsafe for people.

You also have the need for these waste disposal bins in communities who would otherwise have no place to put their medications, which could get into the wrong hands of people who could utilize those items illegally.

Before the bins were available, the only methods people had of disposing unused medications was flushing it down the drain or throwing it in the trash. What environmental hazards does that pose?

If you just flush it down the toilet, [that causes] a lot of issues. When unwanted medications are flushed down the toilet, they get into our streams and river system, which pollutes those water sources.

Environmentally, there's a multitude of challenges and problems when you don't dispose of medications in [appropriate] places. When you have pills on the street, who knows whose hands those pills can get into? Now we're talking about other environmental protection issues that could cost the county or the state funds to keep areas clean. There's a major need environmentally to have these bins in place in every community.

What types of materials can and cannot be accepted at take-back bins?

At each site, they are mandated to post and inform the public about what products can or cannot go into the med bins. Needles and/or syringes are not accepted in the med bin program. For safe needle and syringe disposal options, visit safeneedledisposal.org.

Not just any retail business can host a take-back bin. Typically, appropriate sites include pharmacies, hospitals with pharmacies and law enforcement locations, correct?

Those are the three general sites that we've found that work.



Justin Weiss, CPSC Senior Associate, stands next to a bin installed as part of the California Drug Take-Back Program.
PHOTO BY BRAD SANBORN, CPSC SENIOR ASSOCIATE

Is there any support hosting sites can get?

CPSC (California Product Stewardship Council) has well-trained staff who will help with the process of getting a med bin in place, while working with the onsite pharmacist or law enforcement agency, so that medications can get to the proper place.

For more information, visit www.takebackdrugs.org.

For more information on what types of medications can be accepted or for take-back bin locations, visit www.takebackdrugs.org.

HOW YOU CAN HELP



WHY MEDICATION TAKE-BACK BINS WORK



Where to find a medication take-back bin?

Many independent pharmacies, hospital pharmacies, and chain pharmacies now include medication take-back bins. Other non-medical facilities, such as law enforcement offices, also offer medication take-back bins for the public to use.

To find the nearest bin to where you live, use this interactive map at:

www.takebackdrugs.org



How does it work?

Follow these easy steps:

- 1 At home, if possible, remove pills and other solid medications from their containers and consolidate in a clear plastic zipper bag. Keep cream medication tightly sealed in their original containers. (NOTE: Keep medications in their child-proof container until just prior to drop off.)
- 2 Remove, mark out, or otherwise obscure personal information from solid and cream medication containers to protect your personal information. Recycle containers for solid medications in your household recycling, if applicable. See your local waste and recycling services provider's website.
- 3 Bring zipper bag and any creams to a bin location and place in the bin. It's that easy!



Questions?

► www.takebackdrugs.org @ info@calpsc.org ☎ 916.706.3420



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"Environmentally, there's a multitude of challenges and problems when you don't dispose of medications and needles in [appropriate] places.

When you have needles on the street, when you have pills on the street, who knows whose hands those pills and syringes can get into? Now we're talking about other environmental protection issues that could cost the county or the state funds to keep areas clean. There's a major need environmentally to have these bins in place in every community."

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