

NEW SAFE DISPOSAL OPTIONS!

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



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Learn why disposing of unused medications is important – and easy



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Find out what can be dropped off in a bin – and what can't



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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 room

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 room visits
19.8 million prescriptions

Fresno County

35 deaths
150 emergency department visits
637,726 prescriptions

Kern County

92 deaths
355 emergency department visits
582,667 prescriptions

Kings County

4 deaths
53 emergency department visits
89,945 prescriptions

Madera County

6 deaths
28 emergency department visits
91,756 prescriptions

Mariposa County

0 deaths
12 emergency department visits
14,441 prescriptions

Merced County

20 deaths
46 emergency department visits
158,352 prescriptions

Monterey County

8 deaths
75 emergency department visits
193,554 prescriptions

San Benito County

2 deaths
12 emergency department visits
27,058 prescriptions

Tulare County

7 deaths
75 emergency department visits
274,414 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.

If unused medications 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 Take-Back

California 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 put our bins in in 2018," says Reb Close, M.D., the lead clinical physician for the County of Monterey, who also is in charge of tracking the bins. "We've collected 10,000 pounds of medication. This is so exciting just to know these chemicals are not going into our water supply and landfills. (We've) also seen the ravages prescription drug use are having on our community... and this keeps them out of circulation."

Hosting a bin through this program is easy and free—installation, disposal, and promotion are included. Bins can be placed in pharmacies, hospitals with pharmacies, 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-to-energy facility and converted to energy. This is a complete win!

"We've collected 10,000 pounds of medication. This is so exciting just to know these chemicals are not going into our water supply and landfills."

Reb Close, M.D., lead clinical physician
County of Monterey

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.

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 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 years-long effort by the

KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE AND CLEAN

Medication take-back bins provide easy disposal options

BY ANNE STOKES

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

“Patients and families are looking for a way to get rid of old medications, to simplify

they don't use, whether they're over-the-counter or if their doctor happens to change their prescription because it doesn't work, then they'll have left-over pills. Over the years, that leads to a medicine cabinet that's full.”

Don't rush to flush

Even in the recent past, people were advised to flush unused medications down the drain. Unfortunately, wastewater

and being diverted that way,” says Dr. Vohra.

Not getting rid of medications has its risks

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 130 Americans die from opioid overdoses every day. In 2017, 36% of those opioid-related deaths involved prescription medications. And it's not just a risk for teens and adults, young children are also in harm's way. Approximately 50,000 children under age 5 end up in emergency departments annually because of accidental poisoning; 95% of those kids got into medicine cabinets on their own.

A better option

Medication take-back bins provide a convenient and safe option to responsibly dispose of unwanted medications.

“If you have old prescriptions, even over-the-counter medications, it's better just to get rid of those and a take-back program allows people both an opportunity and a place to do that,” says Dr. Vohra. “A medication take-back program allows people a safe mechanism to get rid of their medications and make sure they don't get reintroduced somewhere else, whether it's in the environment or the culture at large.”

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

“Patients and families are looking for a way to get rid of old medications, to simplify what they have at home, and make sure that people who could be harmed by accidental ingestion don't have access to them.”

Dr. Rais Vohra
Interim Health Officer, Fresno County
Department of Public Health



what they have at home, and make sure that people who could be harmed by accidental ingestion don't have access to them,” says Dr. Rais Vohra, interim health officer for the Fresno County Department of Public Health and medical director of the Fresno-Madera division of the California Poison Control System. “Anyone who goes to the store and ends up getting medications that

treatment facilities aren't designed to remove these contaminants. This means what gets flushed down the toilet often pollutes the same watersheds that supply communities' drinking water.

“People are very appropriately concerned about medications getting into the water supply or a landfill, or it even being thrown in the trash



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



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



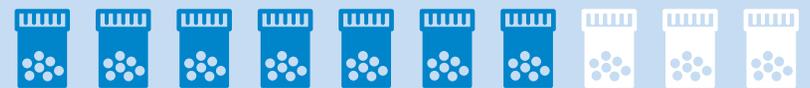
DON'T LEAVE DRUGS FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO TAKE

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.

BETTER IN THE BIN THAN IN WATER SUPPLY

Proper disposal keeps dangerous drugs out of the environment

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 pharmacies, hospitals with pharmacies and law-enforcement agencies 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-energy plants.

In one way or another, thousands of people across California touch this chain of events, including Janna Faulk, the recycling coordinator for Salinas Valley Recycles (SVR) in Monterey County.

which could have ended up in the groundwater," Faulk says.

The bin program is making a major difference in the Salinas Valley, says Faulk. "Removal of pharmaceuticals prior to them getting into the waste

"The bin program helps the environment and the community at the same time. We want to get more bins out there."

Janna Faulk
Recycling coordinator, Salinas Valley Recycles

Faulk coordinates the six take-back bins in the Salinas Valley area, and brought in Montage Health of Monterey as a partner.

"(SVR) is the point of contact to ensure the bin contents are disposed of properly," Faulk says. In 2019 to present, "We removed 1,294 pounds of pharmaceuticals from our six bins,

stream is the best course of action, and the program is taking a lot of them out of our waterways and groundwater."

Beyond that, "The wastewater in Salinas and on the Monterey Peninsula is treated and then used (to irrigate agriculture), so any medications we can pull out of the



Janna Faulk
PHOTO COURTESY OF JANNA FAULK

waste streams is huge because our wastewater treatment plants can't get these medications out," Faulk says.

Another driving force who helped arrange for the bins is Dr. Reb Close of the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula.

"Monterey County is uniquely able to benefit from this service, given our reliance on our agricultural and commercial fishing industries, and tourism related to our marine life and beautiful coastlines," Dr. Close says.

"Without these bins, thousands of pounds of medications would have potentially ended up in our water supply and our trash, or would be available for potential misuse."

The bottom line, says Faulk: "The bin program helps the environment and the community at the same time. We want to get more bins out there."

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.

'THE NEED IS CLEARLY THERE'

Drug take-back bins help solve complex problem

BY ANNE STOKES

Take-back bins prevent unused medications and medical sharps from being misused and keeps them from polluting the environment. We talked to Daniel Gonzalez, Program Manager of the California Health Collaborative, a member organization of the Central Valley Opioid Safety Coalition, to understand how bins keep communities healthy.



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

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

I think it's a great service that's been implemented across the county in many communities here. It bridges a gap by providing an outlet for proper disposal for many community members that don't have the ability to dispose at home or the knowledge to dispose of properly. It's really a useful utility to dispose of unused and expired medications.

What are the risks of not disposing of medications responsibly?

There are plenty of risks of not disposing of them properly and allowing them to accumulate, especially if they're expired. Clearly the biggest one is accessibility to them. If parents, adults, or guardians are not properly securing those medications, you have the access, which is the

number one contributor of the abuse, misuse, and overdoses that we see throughout the U.S.

If you're not properly disposing of them and simply discarding them into the trash can without taking any precautionary steps, you're indirectly encouraging that access to individuals who may rummage through that trash or creating complications for the

"It bridges a gap by providing an outlet for proper disposal for many community members."

Daniel Gonzalez
Program manager, California Health Collaborative

environment as well.

How well are the bins being received and used?

It varies based on site; some sites utilize it more than others depending on the size of the community and the

accessibility to them. For example in Clovis, which is about a five-minute drive from the urban area of Fresno, there are easily hundreds of pounds that are collected a month there. The need is clearly there.

What type of materials can be accepted?

For these bins, it's only the

containers.

What materials cannot be disposed of in the bins?

Any containers with liquid, trash, [and] no sharps. And in our boxes we always place decals that discourage and educate the people who are about to dispose of [these materials] to ensure that they're knowledgeable on what's allowed to be disposed of in there.

For more information, please visit www.takebackdrugs.org.

medications themselves. We highly encourage and educate our public to just dispose of the medications themselves, they have to dispose of the medication containers on their own [and] remove any personal information listed on those medicine

For more information on what types of medications can be accepted and 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!

"These take-back bins are a **safe and convenient way for people to dispose of their unused medications, which will help fight prescription drug abuse and keep pharmaceuticals out of our water supply.** It's a win for public health, the environment, and consumers. As the author of SB 212, which created the first in the nation statewide drug and needle take-back program funded by the producers of these products, I am thrilled that millions of Californians throughout the state will be able to easily dispose of their unused medications."

Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson
Santa Barbara

"Drug take-back bins provide a safe place for consumers to dispose of their unused, unwanted or expired medications, including opioids and other controlled substances. **Proper disposal of prescription medications protects the public by keeping dangerous drugs off the street.**"

Bob Dávila
California State Board of Pharmacy



Questions?

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