

# Tips to Prevent Drug-Related Injuries

## ? Did You Know?

- Adverse drug events (ADEs) lead to approximately 1.3 million annual emergency department visits, with 350,000 patients requiring hospitalization for further treatment.
- Drug-related injuries encompass medication errors, adverse drug reactions, allergic reactions, and overdoses.
- Certain medication classes like antibiotics, blood thinners, diabetes medications, and prescription opioids commonly cause ADEs, warranting closer monitoring.
- People with multiple medical conditions, those taking more than five medications, and older individuals are at an increased risk of ADEs.

Although necessary, keeping medication in your house can put you and your family at risk. However, there are some things you can do to help reduce the likelihood of experiencing an accidental drug-related injury – **Communicate, Organize, Store, and Dispose**.



## Communicate

- Talk with your health care provider before starting any new prescription, over the counter (OTC) medicine, or supplement, and verify whether you need to change or stop taking any of your other medications.
- Ask for information from your provider or pharmacist about your medicines in terms you can understand, including potential side effects, both when your medicines are prescribed and when you pick them up from the pharmacy.
- Ask for clarification if you have any questions about the directions on your medicine label.



## Get Organized

- Check to see if any of your prescription medicines are expired, since taking expired medication may no longer be safe or effective.
- Create a file that includes the written information that comes with your medicines and keep these guides for as long as you are taking the medication.
- Use a pill organizer specifically for “your” medications. Do not store medications for more than one person in the same pill box.





## Store Safely

- Safely store medications out of reach of infants, children, teens, and pets.
- Store medication in the original packaging with the safety lock tightened and secured.
- Do not store your medications in places that allow easy access to your pills such as bathrooms and kitchens.
- Avoid storing medication in the bathroom because changes in humidity and temperature can compromise your medication.
- Put medication away every time, and never leave it out on a counter or a bedside.



## Dispose Properly

- Throw out medicines that are out of date or no longer being used.
- Use community “drug take back” programs. <https://www.in.gov/bitterpill/take-back-locations/>
- If there are no disposal sites in your area, there are ways to safely dispose of your medication at home.
  - Review the medication’s package insert to determine specific instructions.
  - Identify if your medication is on the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) flush list.
  - If no medicine take-back programs are available in your area, and there are no specific disposal instructions on the label (such as flushing), you can also follow the simple steps below to dispose of medicines in the household trash:



**Mix** medication (do not crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance, such as dirt, kitty litter, or used coffee grounds.



**Place** the mixture in a container, such as a sealed plastic bag.



**Throw** the container in your household trash.



**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.



## Other Resources

- [Adverse Drug Events in Adults | Medication Safety Program | CDC](#)
- [Prescription Safety \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [Bitterpill: Medicine Disposal](#)
- [20 Tips To Help Prevent Medical Errors \(ahrq.gov\)](#)
- [Taking Medicines Safely as You Age | National Institute on Aging \(nih.gov\)](#)
- [Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know | FDA](#)
- [FDA Flush List | fda.gov](#)

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