

It's Not Worth the Risk: Get Rid of Unused Prescriptions



**GET THE TRUTH
ON RISKY DRUG USE**

After injury or illness, you may be tempted to keep extra medicine “just in case” or to share with others, but it’s not worth the [potential risks!](#)

WHY GET RID OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS?

Taking prescription drugs in a way not prescribed to you by your health care provider could:

1. Put your career on the line:

- › If you pop positive for a prescription drug taken outside of your provider’s direction or that wasn’t prescribed to you, you could face disciplinary action under the UCMJ.
- › You might think it’s a good idea to manage stress or do your job with the help of prescription drugs—either by taking more than prescribed, taking them longer than prescribed or taking some not prescribed to you at all. But these drugs can actually hurt your work performance.
 - Find other ways to handle stress at:
 - Too Much to Lose: [Tips to Ease Stress](#)
 - Military OneSource: [Managing Stress](#)
- › Taking certain medicines can be a job disqualifier or impact your duty. Be sure to explain your job duties to your provider before starting a new prescription.

2. Be a risk factor for suicide:

- › In 2018, 541 Service members across the military’s Active and Reserve Components died by suicide. Safely dispose of your unused medicine to prevent you or your friends from using it to cause harm during a difficult time.

3. Lead to misuse:

- › Avoid developing dependence or addiction by carefully following your provider’s instructions, especially when it comes to pain medication.
- › Pain medication shouldn’t make all your pain go away. Take what you are prescribed so you can do your activities or job without too much pain. Taking more than prescribed to minimize pain or be pain free can be dangerous.



HOW DO I GET RID OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS SAFELY?

If you are in the U.S. or a U.S. Territory, there are two ways to get rid of prescription drugs. If you are outside of the U.S., follow your host nation's rules for safe drug disposal.

Option 1:

- › Visit your military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacy to participate in the Drug Take Back program. Your MTF pharmacy will offer one or both of the following options:
 - **Mail-in envelopes:** Pick up an envelope, take it home and follow envelope instructions to mail your medications back.
 - **Secure bins:** Bring your medications to your MTF and drop them in the secure bin.
- › The Drug Take Back program will accept both prescription drugs and over-the-counter medicine, including pills, tablets, capsules, ointments, creams, lotions, powders and less than four ounces of liquid medicines.
- › For more information, visit the [TRICARE site](#).

Option 2:

- › If you cannot get to an MTF or it is closed, visit a [public disposal location near you](#).

If the first two options are not available:

- › Check if your medication is on the [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) flush list](#). If it is, you should immediately flush the medicine down the toilet.

If you cannot get to a disposal location and your medication is not on the FDA flush list:

- › Follow these steps to safely throw away medicine on your own:
 - Mix medicines (liquid or pills; do not crush tablets or capsules) with an unappealing substance such as dirt, cat litter or used coffee grounds;
 - Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag;
 - Throw away the container in your trash at home; and
 - Remove all personal information on the prescription label of empty medicine bottles or medicine packaging, then trash or recycle the empty bottle or packaging.
- › Visit the [FDA site](#) to learn more about the proper disposal of prescription medication.

