



"Reduce – Reuse – Recycle"

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### Don't Rush to Flush - No Drugs Down the Drain

If your medicine cabinet is filled with relics of past encounters with doctors and pharmacists, it's important to rid your home of these unused medications.

According to the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health published by the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, twice as many people in the U.S. regularly abused prescription drugs compared to those who used illicit drugs and inhalants combined. More than 70% of people who abused prescription pain relievers obtained them from family or friends. A quarter of high school students have abused prescription drugs, which can lead to addiction and overdose. Ridding the medicine cabinet of unused medications can prevent a tragedy.

Bathroom cabinets are not ideal environs to store medicines or vitamins. Besides being easily accessible to children and guests, bathrooms are frequently warm and humid. Moisture in the air can seep into medicine containers and deteriorate the contents. Store prescriptions, vitamins and other medications in a cool, dark and dry place away from children, and lock up prescription drugs in a drawer, cabinet or lockbox, even if they are in childproof containers.

To effectively manage your medications and vitamins, clean out medicine cabinets annually. Old medicines no longer needed or past their efficacy dates should be disposed of safely. Past practices of flushing medicines down the toilet or throwing them in the trash is now prohibited. Our modern sewage treatment plants are not designed to remove the potent compounds in drugs, and chemicals can pass through into our drinking water, or into the Monterey Bay where they could harm marine life. Drugs thrown in the trash may leach into the groundwater.

Instead, there is a safe, free and environmentally responsible way to get rid of old household medicines, right inside the pharmacy. Alisal Pharmacy located at 323 North Sanborn Road in Salinas, and AllCare Pharmacy located at 331 North Main Street in Salinas now have drop-off bins where you can safely dispose of Schedule II-V controlled and all non-controlled medications, over-the-counter medications (pills and liquids), medicated ointments/lotions, and pet medications. Follow these three steps for disposal:

1. Remove or obscure your personal information from prescription containers to protect your identity;
2. Empty pills into a zipper bag and place the bag in the bin, or dump the pills directly into the bin; keep liquids and creams tightly sealed in original containers and place into the bin; and
3. Recycle empty medication containers.



NOT accepted in the medicine disposal bins are Schedule I (illegal) substances, medical sharps and needles, iodine-containing medications, mercury thermometers, radiopharmaceuticals, chemotherapy or cytotoxic medications, compressed cylinders or aerosols (e.g. asthma inhalers), vitamins and dietary supplements, business medical waste, or bloody or infectious wastes. For information about disposing of these or any other hazardous waste materials, visit [SalinasValleyRecycles.org](http://SalinasValleyRecycles.org).

