

everything you should know about

# Rx medicine

## storage and disposal



# Safeguarding Prescription Medicines in Your Home: Your Personal Responsibility

When used as directed, prescription medicines can play a critical role in treating a range of debilitating diseases and conditions. Yet many don't realize the responsibilities that come with having prescription medicine – especially a controlled substance – in the home.



Unused and easily accessible medicines have the potential to be misused and abused, particularly by teens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prescription medicines most commonly abused by youth include pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants and depressants.<sup>1</sup>

Properly storing and disposing of prescription medicines in your home is an important way to reduce the risk of their misuse and abuse by family members and others.



## The **reality** of prescription medicine misuse and abuse

- 70% of people 12 and older who abused pain relievers in 2007-2008 say they got them from a friend or relative.<sup>2</sup>
- 1 in 5 U.S. high school students report abusing a prescription medication at least once in their lives.<sup>3</sup>
- More teens abuse prescription drugs than any illicit drug except marijuana.<sup>4</sup>



Many people don't realize the **responsibilities** that come with having prescription medicine – especially a controlled substance – in the home.



**DO** lock up medicines that are at risk for being abused. **DON'T** leave medicines in places that are easily accessible to children.



# Storing Your Prescription Medicine

Medicine that is not properly secured could:

- be taken or stolen from the home by someone for whom it is not intended
- be damaged by being stored in an unsuitable place
- inadvertently poison children or pets

## The Do's and Don'ts of Safe Medicine Storage

- ✓ **DO** store medicines in a cool, dry place
- ✓ **DO** lock up medicines that are at risk for being abused – ask your community pharmacist or other healthcare professional if the prescription medicine prescribed to you or a household member has abuse potential
- ✓ **DO** store medicines in original containers – the label on the bottle provides important information about the medicine such as who it is prescribed for and the date it was dispensed
- ✓ **DO** keep track of how many pills you have during the course of treatment
- ✓ **DO** discard medicines that are no longer needed or that have expired
  
- X **DON'T** leave medicines in places that are easily accessible for children
- X **DON'T** share medicine with someone for whom it was not intended
- X **DON'T** repack medicine in unmarked containers
- X **DON'T** leave medicines that are at risk for being abused in plain sight or in places that aren't secure
- X **DON'T** take medicines in front of children as they often mimic the behavior of adults



### Did you know?

The bathroom is not the ideal place for many medicines. The heat, humidity and changing temperatures can reduce drug potency, especially for pills or capsules.<sup>5</sup>

# Tips for Preventing Prescription Medicine Misuse and Abuse

- Keep an updated list of medicines in your home. Take an inventory at least twice a year – when clocks ‘spring’ forward in the spring and ‘fall’ back in autumn, for example.
- Keep prescription medicines safely stored. A locked storage area can help prevent others from accessing medicine not intended for them; advise your friends and family members to do the same.
- Warn your teens that taking someone else’s prescription medicine can be just as dangerous – and potentially as lethal – as taking illegal street drugs.



## Proper Disposal of Prescription Medicine

It is important to get rid of medicine that is longer needed or expired. There is no set rule for disposing of all medicines, so talk to your community pharmacist about the best way to get rid of unused or unwanted medicines in your home. Also, you can visit [www.disposemymeds.org](http://www.disposemymeds.org) or the Food and Drug Administration’s website at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) and search for “Rx drug disposal.”



## Take the Personal Responsibility Pledge!

It is dangerous for anyone other than you to take your prescription medicine. We all need to play an important role in making sure that our medicine doesn’t fall into anybody else’s hands, including family members.

You can start making a difference right now. Go to [safeguardmymeds.org](http://safeguardmymeds.org) and take the *Personal Responsibility Pledge*. Remember, your medicines are your responsibility.



Safeguard My Meds is sponsored by the National Community Pharmacists Association and Purdue Pharma L.P.