

Medicine Cabinet Clean Out

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At least once a year people who take medications regularly or as needed, should organize the place they store their medications. This is a great way to keep your family safe by ensuring you remove the expired medications, as well as discarding prescription medications that are no longer being used.

Expired medications should be disposed of as they may no longer work as intended beyond their expiration date. Removing prescription medications that are no longer being used can prevent a medication error from occurring by ensuring that the medicine will not be mistaken for another medication or taken by accident. When discarding medications, it is important to make sure they are disposed of safely to prevent children or animals from coming into contact with them.

Recommendations from the Office of National Drug Control Policy regarding disposal of prescriptions medication are as follows:

- 1) Take unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs out of their original container
- 2) Mix the prescription drugs with an undesirable substance, like used coffee grounds or kitty litter, and put them in impermeable, non-descript containers, such as empty cans or sealable bags, further ensuring that the drugs are not diverted or accidentally ingested by children or pets
- 3) Throw these containers in the trash

When choosing an area to store your medications, make sure to select a place that is not in the direct sunlight and in which temperature and moisture do not significantly fluctuate. Bathrooms are an example of a location that is commonly used to store medications but they are not ideal places.

In addition, it is very important to select a place that is not accessible to children. This sounds obvious – but it is an important point that cannot be emphasized enough. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates over 53,000 children under that age of 4 years are treated annually in U.S. hospitals for unintended medication exposure. It is important to remember that young children can easily reach medications placed on tables, in purses or drawers, and they frequently place items in their mouths. Also, children tend to imitate adults; so, it is best not to take medication in front of children and never call medication candy. Furthermore, have the phone number of your local Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) easily accessible in case of an accidental ingestion or exposure.

So, take some time to clean out the medicine cabinet – it will help keep your family safe, and you may even gain some extra storage area.