



**Monday through Friday**  
8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

**Saturdays & Holidays**  
9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

**Sundays & Christmas**  
Noon to 4:00 P.M.

## ***IT'S ABOUT PAIN***

A monthly service of Kirkpatrick Family Care

Vol. 4, Number 1, January 2019

### **HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNWANTED or UNNEEDED PILLS**

#### **What if:**

- Your opioid becomes ineffective, or
- A surgery or nerve block eliminates your pain, or
- You develop a complication that forces a change of narcotic, or
- You learn that your insurance will no longer cover current meds

#### **How can you discard these pills appropriately?**

First, many authorities believe that unused leftover pills can find their way into the black market and allegedly contribute to the opioid epidemic. While, a very high percentage of opioid-associated deaths are due to fentanyl, heroin, and meth, the anti-opioid people believe that legal opioids may play a role in young people becoming eventual users of the dangerous illegal meds.

Second, if you decide to discard pills, here are some potential methods, and consequences:

- Pour them down the toilet. While “the solution to pollution is dilution” is an accepted principle of controlling industrial toxins and sewage, there is a theoretical concern that somehow that toilet water might reach the drinking water reservoirs and streams.
- Grind them up and mix with coffee grounds, ashes or other non-edible wastes. Again, there’s a theoretical concern with polluting our municipal dumps. However, recovery of the salable drug morsels seems improbably inefficient.
- Keep them for the future. While most medical authorities say that “expiration dates” on pill bottles are inaccurate (and pills are good for 5, 10, or 15 years), this practice could lead to kids taking pills from the medicine cabinet. (And, whereas a patient may know how many pills remain in the bottle at the time they cease to use them, how many will recall when pills have been sitting there for years?)
- Take them to a specific law enforcement facility or a collection center. No problems from this.
- Take them to the doctors’ office for disposal in a Medical Waste Collection device.

The other point to be made here is that we as prescribers are asked to keep track of ALL pills. That is: we need to prescribe the exact number of pills required till the next visit (1-2 months). Therefore:

- We write for a specified number per day, such as 4 times a day and multiply by 30 or 60.



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- If you take pills as needed, we ask you to estimate your needs per day, and multiply.
- We give early refills only for legitimate travel conflicts, or require evaluations (below).
- For lost or stolen pills, we require a police report, pharmacy check and urine drug screen.

**We prescribers are expected to be very cautious with prescriptions. And you must be similarly careful with your medications that are no longer needed.**