

# Safe Medication Disposal

Medications may be harmful if taken by someone other than the person for whom they were prescribed, and they can be harmful to the environment if not disposed of safely.

Federal DEA laws and Pennsylvania Statutes encourage medication disposal to be conducted by the patient, patient caregiver or family, and limit the legal right of medical professionals to destroy controlled substances. A hospice physician, nurse, or social worker may only assist the family/caregiver with the destruction of controlled drugs at the time of a patient's death, if the patient was living at home, and if the family/caregiver requests assistance. **Anova employees are never legally permitted to take possession of your medications or dispose of your medications under any other circumstances. If you reside in a skilled nursing facility or institution that provides extended health-care to its residents, the facility will dispose of medications for you (the hospice nurse may assist with this if requested).**

During the course of your care, there may be changes in your condition that require medication to be discontinued. It is always best to destroy medications when they are no longer needed. Anova is concerned about your safety and wants you to feel comfortable and confident with proper medication destruction.



## Safeguards

1. Do not give medicines to anyone else. Medications should ONLY be used by the person whom they were prescribed for.
2. Do not flush medicine down the toilet.
3. Do not pour medicine down the drain.
4. Flushing medications down the toilet or drain can contaminate our water supply.
5. Do not put medicines in the trash without disposing of them properly as explained below.



## First Choice: Drug Take-Back Events


To dispose of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, Drug Take Back Events are generally held in April and October throughout the county. The PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs has a collection site locator on their website [www.ddap.pa.gov](http://www.ddap.pa.gov). If you need help finding an event or site, we can assist you. Some counties also hold household hazardous waste collection days, where prescription and over-the-counter drugs are accepted at a central location for proper disposal. Similarly, one of our Anova nurses (RN, LPN, LVN, NP, MD, or PA) may also dispose of the medications if the patient is living at home and the family/caregiver requests assistance.


***\* If you are personally disposing of medications, please follow the recommendations on the following page to render them unusable.***

## Anova Health Care System

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## Second Choice: Self-Disposal

1. Keep the medicine in the original container. This will help identify the contents if someone accidentally swallows the medication.
2. Mark out your name and prescription number. This will prevent someone from obtaining personal information.
3. Gather absorbent disposable material such as a disposable underpad, disposable adult or child diaper, kitty litter, coffee grounds, paper toweling, and a plastic bag.
4. Make the medicine unusable. *\*See the chart on the following page for instructions.*
5. Fold and place the disposable absorbent material containing liquid in a plastic bag.
6. Place all medicine bottles in a plain paper or plastic bag. Then place that plastic bag into another to prevent leaking.
7. Dispose of all bags in the regular trash. Do not put anything in your recycling bin.

### Follow these steps to make medications unusable before self-disposal

	<b>Pills Tablets Capsules</b>	Add water or soda to the pill bottle (container). Wait until the pills are dissolved and pour the liquid into your disposable absorbent material OR tape the pill bottle shut with the liquid and pills inside.
	<b>Liquids Infusion Bags</b>	If the bottle is large enough, add something inedible directly into the bottle. Examples: cat litter, dirt, coffee grounds or cornstarch. If the container has too small an opening, pour the liquid contents directly into your absorbent disposable material.
	<b>Vials</b>	Open vials, or draw up solution and pour contents onto an absorbent pad/disposable adult brief. Discard syringes and empty vials in a puncture-resistant container such as a glass bottle or a coffee can with a lid. Seal or secure closed with tape.
	<b>Patches Lozenges</b>	Put on disposable gloves to prevent you from coming in contact with medicine that is absorbed through the skin. Cut each package open and remove the patch or lozenge. Place patch or lozenges in an empty disposable container, such as a medicine container, Ziploc bag, or disposable bottle. Add water. Close and secure with tape. Dispose of gloves. Wash hands.

For more information on medication disposal and medication disposal options, go to:



<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/safe-disposal-medicines/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know>  
[https://www.ddap.pa.gov/Prevention/pages/drug\\_take\\_back.aspx](https://www.ddap.pa.gov/Prevention/pages/drug_take_back.aspx)





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## Follow these steps to make medications unusable before self-disposal

	<b>Ampules</b>	Put on disposable gloves. Use a washcloth or kitchen towel to hold the ampule. Bend neck of ampule away from your body and break open. Pour contents into absorbent pad/disposable adult brief. Dispose of ampule in a puncture-resistant container such as a coffee can with a lid. Secure with tape. Dispose of gloves. Wash hands.
	<b>Suppositories</b>	Open the end of the suppository packaging and place the entire contents in an empty plastic container. Add water, cover container and secure with tape.

## Safe Disposal of Needles & Syringes (Sharps)

### Handle All Sharps Carefully To Prevent Injury

Dispose of needles and syringes (SHARPS) in a puncture-resistant container.

Use an empty household container with these features:



#### DO NOT USE

These containers can break or puncture easily.



Using a permanent marker write "**SHARPS**" on the container.  
When the container is no more than two-thirds full, tape tightly.



Dispose of container in regular trash



A hospice nurse is available 24 hours a day; just call 1.888.266.8211





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There are several ways to get rid of a sharps disposal container. Check with your local trash removal services or health department (listed in the city or country government (blue) pages in your phone book) or search the Internet for safe sharps disposal programs available in your area.

**Some examples of safe sharps disposal methods are briefly described below:**



## Drop Box or Supervised Collection Sites

You may be able to drop off your sharps disposal containers at collection sites, such as doctors' offices, hospitals, pharmacies, health departments, medical waste facilities, and police or fire stations. Services may be free or have a nominal fee.



## Household Hazardous Waste Collection Sites

You may be able to drop off your sharps disposal containers at local public household hazardous waste collection sites. These are sites that also commonly accept hazardous materials such as household cleaners, paints, and motor oil.



## Mail-Back Programs

You may be able to mail certain FDA-cleared sharps disposal containers to a collection site for proper disposal. This service usually requires a fee. Fees vary, depending on the size of the container. Follow the manufacturer's instructions included with the disposal container, as these programs may have specific requirements for mail-back.



## Residential Special Waste Pickup Services

Your community may provide pickup services using a sharps disposal container acceptable to the pickup company, either provided to you by the pickup services company or one that you already own, depending on the company guidelines for pickup. The container is placed outside the home for collection by trained special waste handlers. Some programs require customers to call for pickup while others offer regular pickup schedules.



## For more information specific to your state:

Visit the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal's Safe Needle Disposal website to find information including:

- ✓ Types of sharps containers that can be used
- ✓ Disposal programs in your area
- ✓ How to label your sharps disposal containers
- ✓ How to secure the lid of your sharps disposal container
- ✓ Whether sharps disposal containers can be thrown away in the common trash

