

## Did You Know?

Each year thousands of pets are accidentally poisoned when they eat human or pet medications, even ones prescribed for them. Your furry friends can get themselves into trouble when they find prescription or over-the-counter medications around the house, or in the trash.



Medicines that are flushed down sinks or toilets, or thrown in landfills, can also cause environmental problems. They end up in our rivers, lakes, coastal waters, and even in our drinking water. Fish and other aquatic animals that live in water contaminated with pharmaceuticals have shown impaired development and reproduction.



For more information

[unwantedmeds.org](http://unwantedmeds.org)

[avma.org/unwantedmeds](http://avma.org/unwantedmeds)

Prescription for Safety:  
How to Dispose of  
Unwanted Medicine



The American Veterinary Medical Association and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant provided this information.

# What Can You Do?



You can help protect your family, pets and the environment by properly using, storing and disposing of medications. The following tips work whether the medicine is for people or pets.



## 5 Simple ways you can be part of the solution

### 1. Use Medicine as Directed

Follow your veterinarian's instructions when giving medication to your pet. Give every dose as instructed, even if your pet's condition seems to be improving or is resolved. Your pet will benefit by avoiding disease relapse and drug resistance, and you won't have to worry about disposing of any leftover doses. Occasionally, drugs may need to be stopped or readjusted for medical reasons. Call your veterinarian if you are concerned about how your pet is responding to the medication.

### 2. Store Medicine Correctly

Keep medicine out of reach of children and pets. Use locked cabinets or store medications in places that are not accessible to them.

### 3. Don't Flush Medicine

To help keep pharmaceuticals out of the environment, do not dispose of medicine down the sink or toilet.

### 4. Don't Share or Sell Medicine

Sharing medications can be dangerous. A medication prescribed for you should only be taken by you. The same rule applies to your pet. To avoid adverse, and potentially fatal, problems, your pet's medicine should not be given to another animal.

### 5. Properly Dispose of Medicine

Take unwanted medicine to a collection program so that it can be properly incinerated. To find a program near you, go to: [unwantedmeds.org](http://unwantedmeds.org)

If your community does not have a collection program, don't flush unwanted medicines. While disposal in a landfill is not the preferred option, it is sometimes unavoidable. Before you throw your medicine in the trash follow these tips:

- ✓ Keep medicine in the original container. Do not crush pills.
- ✓ Add kitty litter or coffee grounds and tightly replace the lid.
- ✓ Mark out all personal information from the label, but leave the medication name and dose visible.
- ✓ Seal the bottle in a leak-proof container such as a coffee can.
- ✓ Dispose of packaged medicine in the trash on or as close to pick-up day as possible.