

# How to handle and dispose of opioids safely

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## What is an opioid?

- An opioid is a type of medicine used to help relieve moderate to severe pain. It is often prescribed after a surgery or serious injury.
- Examples of opioids include:
  - Hydrocodone/acetaminophen. Some brand names are Norco, Lortab and Vicodin.
  - Oxycodone/acetaminophen. The brand name is Percocet.
  - Oxycodone. The brand name is Roxicodone.
  - Hydromorphone. The brand name is Dilaudid.
  - Morphine
  - Tramadol. The brand name is Ultram.
- When an opioid is used as prescribed by your doctor, there is a very low risk for addiction and it is a safe medicine for your child.

## What should I know if my child is prescribed opioids?

- Follow the instructions your child's doctor gives you. **NEVER** give your child more opioids than prescribed. This includes giving the medicine more often or giving more pills at one time.
- If your child is still in pain, call your child's doctor for advice on next steps.
- You can help prevent misuse and abuse.
  - Never sell or share opioids, even with family members.
  - Never use another person's opioids.
- The number one way to prevent misuse and abuse is to store all opioids in a secure place where others cannot get to them. **The safest place to store all medicines is a lockbox** that is out of reach of children, family members, friends and visitors.

## What should I do if my child has unused opioids left?

It is important that you dispose of unused opioids safely. Do not keep them just in case your child has more pain later on. This can lead to opioid misuse and abuse.

## How should I dispose of opioids?

To safely and securely dispose of unused opioids, you may:

- Use a drug drop box. This is the best way to dispose of your child's unused opioids.
  - In most Georgia counties, there are drug drop boxes at the Sheriff's or Police Department. Most locations are always open.
  - To view a complete list of drug drop box locations and hours, visit [stoprxabuseinga.org](http://stoprxabuseinga.org).

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

## How to handle and dispose of opioids safely, continued

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- Dispose of the opioids yourself.
  - Only use this method if there are no drug drop box programs near you.
  - **All opioids EXCEPT TRAMADOL are approved by the FDA to flush down the toilet.**
  - For any opioid, including Tramadol, you may dispose of your child's opioids as follows:
    - Take the medicine out of the original bottle.\*\*
    - **Crush the medicines** in a Ziploc bag.
    - In the bag with the crushed medicines, add something that no one would want to eat and reseal the bag. Examples include dirt, kitty litter or used coffee grounds.
    - The sealed bag and the empty drug bottle are now safe to throw away in your normal trash.

**\*\* Make sure to scratch off or mark over the personal details from the medicine label by using a permanent marker or duct tape.**

## What should I do if I have more questions?

- For questions, you may visit these websites:
  - [deaddiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal](https://deaddiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal)
  - [stoprxabuseinga.org](https://stoprxabuseinga.org)
- For a list of public disposal locations near you, visit [rxdrugdropbox.org](https://rxdrugdropbox.org).

*Children's Healthcare of Atlanta has not reviewed all of the sites listed as resources and does not make any representations regarding their content or accuracy. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta does not recommend or endorse any particular products, services or the content or use of any third party websites, or make any determination that such products, services or websites are necessary or appropriate for you or for the use in rendering care to patients. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is not responsible for the content of any of the above-referenced sites or any sites linked to these Sites. Use of the links provided on this or other sites is at your sole risk.*

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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