

Disposal of prescription pain relievers in Kentucky

The 2011 *Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)* estimates that more than 1 million Kentucky adults have family members or friends who have experienced problems as a result of abusing opioid prescription pain relievers such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet, or codeine.

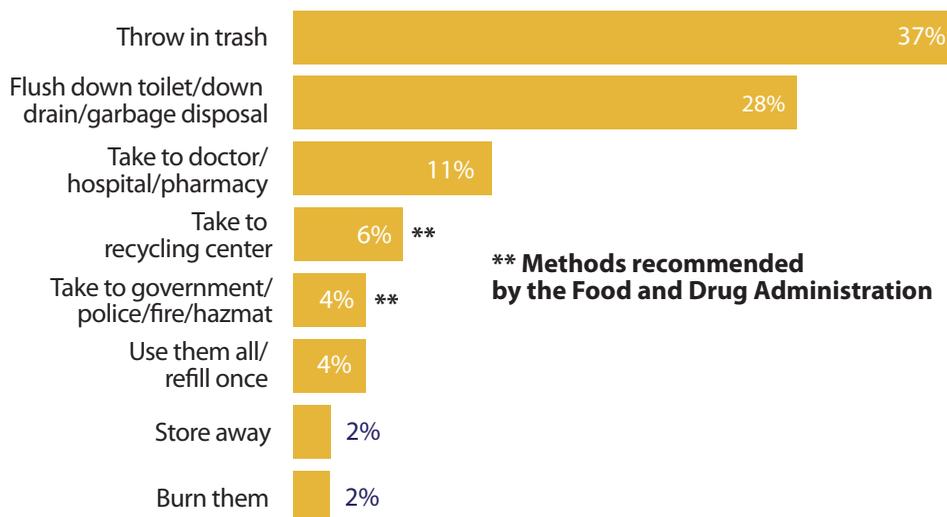
Kentucky ranks sixth in the nation for overdose deaths involving prescription pain relievers.¹ These drug overdose deaths correspond to a steep increase in the sales of opioid pain relievers. Kentucky is in the top quarter of states in the rate of prescription pain relievers sold per capita.²

Kentuckians may not know that keeping unused prescription drugs in a medicine cabinet raises the risk of misuse and abuse of those drugs. In addition, many Kentuckians are not disposing of their drugs properly.

¹ Paulozzi, LJ, Jones, CM, Mack, KA, Rudd, RA. (2011.) Vital Signs: Overdoses of Prescription Opioid Pain Relievers – United States, 1999-2008. MMWR 60(43):1487-1492. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/3llb65s>.

² Ibid.

How do you typically dispose of unused or expired prescription medications?*



**** Methods recommended by the Food and Drug Administration**

* Does not add to 100% because the responses "other," "do not use medications" and "don't know" were not included

To understand what happens to unused and expired prescription drugs, KHIP asked about prescription drug disposal methods in Kentucky.

Most Kentucky adults dispose of prescription drugs in unsafe ways

More than 6 in 10 Kentucky adults (65%) dispose of prescriptions drugs by throwing them away or flushing them down the drainage system. This

is a public safety and public health issue. Chemicals from wastewater find their way into the water supply. These chemicals can harm people and wildlife.

Take-back programs the safest disposal method

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends the use of medicine take-back programs as the safest way to remove expired,

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These findings unless otherwise noted are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Sept. 27-Oct. 27, 2011, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,621 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 1,313 landline interviews and 308 cell phone interviews. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to $\pm 2.5\%$. There are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects that can introduce error or bias.

For more information about the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, please visit www.healthy-ky.org or www.healthfoundation.org/khip.html.

unwanted, or unused medicines from the home and to reduce the chance of accidental poisonings and overdoses. Just 1 in 10 Kentucky adults (10%) dispose of prescription drugs in a manner that complies with FDA recommendations.

The United States Drug Enforcement Administration

(DEA) launched the first National Prescription Drug Take Back Day in September 2010. The events are held twice a year, in fall and spring. The next National Drug Take Back Day will be held April 28, 2012. This service is free and anonymous.

To find a “take-back” location near you and to learn dates of future

take-back events, visit the DEA website at [http://www.dea.gov/diversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html](http://www.dea.gov/diversion/usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html).

If you miss the April 28 take-back day, you can return unused or expired prescription drugs to a pharmacy, which will properly dispose of them in the safest way for a small fee.