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YOUR AT-HOME CARE GUIDE

medication safety

Northern Illinois Hospice is first in supporting you with the resources you need to ensure the best care. This is one in our series of tip sheets on how to improve safety and well-being in the home environment.

It is the policy of Northern Illinois Hospice to make sure controlled substances are used and disposed of according to state and federal regulations.

Your Northern Illinois Hospice nurse will educate the patient and family about the importance of safe disposal of unwanted controlled substances, and how to use the options available to them.

Northern Illinois Hospice is not authorized to receive pharmaceutical-controlled substances from patients and families for the purpose of disposal. Instead, a member of the hospice patient's household may dispose of the patient's pharmaceutical-controlled substances.

The Federal Drug Administration has developed guidelines to encourage proper disposal of medicines and help reduce harm from accidental exposure or intentional misuse after they are no longer needed.

- **Follow any specific disposal instructions** on the prescription drug label or patient information that accompanies the medicine.
- **Do not flush medicines** down the sink or toilet unless this information specifically instructs you to do so. Wastewater treatment plants and septic systems are generally not designed to treat pharmaceutical waste. Never burn pharmaceuticals in a burn barrel since it can release toxins.
- **Take advantage of programs that allow safe disposal** of unused drugs. Northern Illinois Beautiful, 815.637.1343, has periodic waste collection events.
- **Transfer unused medicines to collectors** registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Authorized sites may



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include retail, hospital or clinic pharmacies, as well as law enforcement locations. Some offer mail-back programs or collection “drop boxes.” Visit the DEA’s website or call 1.800.882.9539 for more information.

- **If no disposal instructions are given** on the prescription drug label and no take-back program is available in your area, dispose of the drugs in the household trash with the following precautions:
 1. Remove them from their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds, dirt or kitty litter (this makes the drug less appealing to children and pets, and harder to find for anyone intentionally searching for drugs).
 2. Place the mixture in a sealable bag, empty can or other container to prevent the drug from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.

It is also important to:

- **Scratch out all identifying information** on the prescription label to make it unreadable. This will help protect your identity and the privacy of your personal health information.
- **Do not give your medicine to friends.** Doctors prescribe medicines based on your specific symptoms and medical history. Something that works for you could be dangerous for someone else.
- **When in doubt about proper disposal,** ask your pharmacist.