

# NEW SAFE DISPOSAL OPTIONS!

Drug take-back bins let you safely dispose of unwanted, unneeded, or expired medications



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Learn why disposing of unused medications is important – and easy



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Find out what can be dropped off in a bin – and what can't



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Learn what can happen if medications are disposed of in the trash or flushed down a drain





## SNAPSHOT OF CALIFORNIA OPIOID USE

Opioid prescriptions in California are decreasing, thanks to a concentrated effort to fight this crisis. But a lot of work still needs to be done.

Drug-related overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. More than three out of five drug overdose deaths involve an opioid.

But the numbers don't stop there. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **for every person who dies of an opioid overdose...**

**12** people are admitted to a treatment program

**25** are seen for complications in an emergency department

**105** report opioid addiction or dependence

**659** report using opioids for non-medical or non-prescribed purposes

**In 2018, health officials tallied these opioid-related statics:**

### California

**2,428** deaths

**8,832** emergency department visits

**19.8 million** prescriptions

### Los Angeles County

**497** deaths

**1,655** emergency department visits

**3,956,420** prescriptions

### Ventura County

**95** deaths

**276** emergency department visits

**481,650** prescriptions

# A SIMPLE SOLUTION

Learn how and why disposing of unused medications is important—and easy

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

**W**e have all had the experience: Maybe your spouse didn't need the painkillers prescribed for recovery from surgery; maybe your teenager didn't use all of his acne medication because of side effects; maybe your elderly grandparent passed away, leaving a shoe box filled with prescription drugs.

If unused medications are thrown away in a garbage can, it is still possible that they may be illegally diverted. If drugs are flushed down a toilet or washed down the sink, they may end up in our landfills and waterways, harming wildlife and entering our drinking water.

Fortunately, there is an easy answer: Medication Take-Back

California Product Stewardship Council and its authors, State Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson and Assemblymembers Phil Ting and Adam Gray. In fact, statistics from up and down the state show that medication bins can result in a significant reduction in opioid deaths when bins are put in place.

"The take-back programs address a very important public health and safety issue," says Bob Davila, a spokesperson for the California State Board of Pharmacy. "Providing a safe way to dispose of (unused medications) keeps them from being abused or sold on the street, but also addresses a very important environmental issue. We just want people to be aware they are available in our community."

Hosting a bin through this program is easy and free—installation, maintenance, disposal and promotion. Bins can be placed in pharmacies, hospitals with pharmacies and law enforcement agencies. People disposing of medications in these bins can also remain anonymous—no need to talk to anyone or answer any questions.

And best of all, the drugs are ultimately incinerated at a waste energy facility and converted to renewable energy, a complete win-win.

*"Providing a safe way to dispose of (unused medications) keeps them from being abused or sold on the street, but also addresses a very important environmental issue."*

Bob Davila, spokesperson  
California State Board of Pharmacy

Where do you get rid of them safely?

And "safely" is the operative word here, because unused medications that are not disposed of properly can cause a myriad of serious public safety concerns.

For example, if unused medications stay in your medicine cabinet, they can fall into the hands of a child or teenager, who could accidentally overdose or begin an addiction. Criminals searching for drugs, especially opioids, may come into your house posing as a prospective homebuyer—or attempt a break-in.

Bins. These bins are safe and convenient disposal options for prescription and over-the-counter medications.

These convenient bins are a part of the California Statewide Drug Take-Back Program, which was funded by a \$3 million grant from the Department of Health Care Services, specifically its Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program aimed at combating the opioid crisis. This is a prelude to the statewide bill, Senate Bill 212, which was signed into law by then-Governor Jerry Brown on Sept. 30, 2018. SB 212 was a years-long effort by the

# KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE AND CLEAN

Medication take-back bins provide a responsible way to dispose of drugs

BY ANNE STOKES

**W**hether to cure disease, ease pain or prevent illness, prescription medications keep people healthy. Unfortunately, along with the power to heal, these drugs also have the potential to cause harm when misused or improperly discarded. In the Los Angeles area, residents have safe and convenient resources to keep that harm at bay: Medication take-back bins.

"They really provide the most convenient and accessible option for residents to take their pharmaceuticals," says Christopher Sheppard, senior civil engineer with Los Angeles County Public Works. "Having additional med bins available to residents adds a layer of convenience that provides better service."

In addition to multiple safe centers and the county's household hazardous waste collection program, L.A. County boasts 50 take-back bins located at pharmacies and other convenient locations. These bins provide an alternative to throwing unused medications in the trash or flushing them down the drain. Such methods pose safety risks to communities and contribute to pollution as wastewater treatment facilities aren't designed to remove

pharmaceutical contaminants.

"In some cases where water is discharged into groundwater, that could create an issue with drinking water," Sheppard says. "It's tough to say what all the constituents are and what their effects might be, but it can't be good. It's better not to have it in there."

Stockpiling medications at home is also common, as many people just don't know where to get rid of them. Keeping large amounts of unused medications at home risks

risk for teens and adults, young children are also in harm's way. Annually, 50,000 children under age 5 end up in emergency rooms because of accidental poisoning; 95% of those kids got into medicine cabinets on their own.

"Stockpiling can also be a target for burglars," Sheppard notes. "Folks that have ill intent know that they want to check medicine cabinets and places like that because people do stockpile them. The more people know that [medications]

*"They really provide the most convenient and accessible option for residents to take their pharmaceuticals."*

**Christopher Sheppard**  
Senior civil engineer, Los Angeles County Public Works



intentional and unintentional misuse, particularly with opioids. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 130 Americans die from opioid overdoses every day. In 2017, 36% of those opioid-related deaths involved prescription medications. And it's not just a

can be easily and responsibly disposed of and they get rid of them on a regular basis, it could eliminate that potential for someone to break in and look for those types of things."

To find a med bin near you, visit [www.takebackdrugs.org](http://www.takebackdrugs.org).



## WHAT GOES IN THE BINS?

- ▶ Prescription medications
- ▶ Over-the-counter medications
- ▶ Medicated ointments and lotions
- ▶ Pet medications



If possible, transfer pills into a zipped plastic bag before placing in the bin.



Leave medicated ointments and lotions tightly sealed in the original containers.



Obscure any personal information.

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## WHAT DOESN'T GO IN THE BIN:

- ▶ Cannabis
- ▶ Illegal controlled substances (heroin, LSD, etc.)
- ▶ Medical sharps and needles
- ▶ Auto-injectors (such as EpiPen®)
- ▶ Iodine-containing medications
- ▶ Mercury thermometers
- ▶ Radiopharmaceuticals
- ▶ Chemotherapy or cytotoxic medications
- ▶ Compressed cylinders or aerosols (such as asthma inhalers)
- ▶ Vitamins and dietary supplements
- ▶ Business medical waste (waste from hospitals, clinics or medical, dental and veterinary practices)

# WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH UNUSED



**Don't store them at home**



- ✗ Those drugs may be taken by young children
- ✗ Or stolen by teens, family members, or visitors
- ✗ Which can lead to accidental overdoses



**Don't flush them down the toilet**



- ✗ Waste water treatment plants cannot remove drugs
- ✗ Leading to contamination of our streams, rivers, and lakes
- ✗ Which is harmful to animals, plants, and people



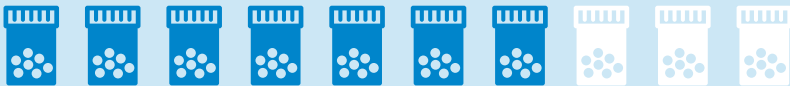
**DON'T LEAVE DRUGS FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO TAKE**

**More than 1/2**



More than half of all American adults take at least one prescription medication daily, with even more medications prescribed that are never taken.

**7 out of 10**



In California, 7 out of 10 opioid-related overdose deaths are due to prescription drugs.

# DRUGS?

Putting your unused or unwanted medications in a drug take-back bin is the safest and most environmentally protective way to dispose of them.



## Don't throw them in the trash



- ✗ These drugs may be taken out of the trash by others
- ✗ Which can lead to illegal use or sale
- ✗ Which fuels the opioid epidemic



## Drop them off in a drug take-back bin



- ✓ You can discard of your drugs safely, conveniently, and anonymously
- ✓ They are completely destroyed through thermal destruction
- ✓ Therefore, they will not enter the environment

9.9 million

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an estimated 9.9 million Americans misuse controlled prescription drugs each year. The study showed the majority of abused prescription drugs were obtained from family and friends, often from the home medicine cabinet and without their knowledge.

9,000



Nearly 9,000 emergency room visits in California annually are attributed to opioid drug overdoses.

# SPREADING THE WORD IN VENTURA COUNTY

How two Thousand Oaks officials joined  
forces for take-back bins

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

**C**alifornia leads the nation in addressing issues that are vital to the public health and safety, and the environment. One crucial piece is the California Statewide Drug Take-Back Program, funded by the California Department of Health Care Services and administered by the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC).

The program targets the opioid crisis and the mishandling of other controlled and over-the-counter drugs. At its heart is a statewide network of Medication Take-Back Bins, placed in law-enforcement agencies, pharmacies and hospitals for public use.

Anyone can anonymously deposit unused and expired medications into the bins, rather than endanger the environment and possibly lives by flushing them down the toilet, throwing them in the trash or stockpiling them at home. The discarded drugs are incinerated at waste-to-energy plants.

In one way or another, thousands of people across California touch this

chain of events, including Spencer Silverstein, a sustainability analyst for the City of Thousand Oaks.

Silverstein learned about CPSC and its take-back bin program in 2018 and quickly recognized the need for more bins in his community. At the time, the sole bin system — based on an antiquated model — was in the Thousand Oaks Police/ East Valley

apparent that the system “was not meeting their needs, so I pointed them to CPSC because getting new bins was easy and seamless. I told

*“Our old system was labor- and cost-intensive. Now we have the least amount of contact with the contents of the bin, and that’s phenomenal.”*

Administrative Sergeant Michael Rompal  
Ventura County Sheriff’s Office

Sheriff’s Station. Silverstein wanted to alert law enforcement to CPSC, so he met with Administrative Sergeant Michael Rompal of the Ventura County Sheriff’s Office.

“I said, ‘Let’s see how your bin is working,’” Silverstein recalls. It was

him that CPSC is a great advocate on behalf of local government.”

“Our old system was labor- and cost-intensive,” Sgt. Rompal says. “Now we have the least amount of contact with the contents of the bin, and that’s phenomenal.”



Sgt. Michael Rompal, left, and sustainability analyst Spencer Silverstein show off the medication bin located at the Thousand Oaks Police Station.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE

Sgt. Rompal went a step further: “I facilitated the installation of the bins in all of our sheriff’s stations in Ventura County, and provided information to other police departments.”

Today, there are three additional bins in pharmacies in Thousand Oaks, and a network of bins in police departments throughout the county.

“It was nice to see a local effort scale up throughout the region in partnership with CPSC, with Sgt. Rompal as the nexus,” Silverstein says. “At the end of the day, we want to keep (unwanted medications) out of the environment and out of the wrong hands — period. If they go into the bins, we’ve accomplished that.”

To find a med bin near you, visit [www.takebackdrugs.org](http://www.takebackdrugs.org).



## FIGHT THE OPIOID CRISIS

**128** Americans die every day from an opioid overdose, says the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

**45%** of drug overdoses are estimated to be opioid-related. In California, that’s more than **2,400 deaths** each year.

**Millions** of Americans are addicted to opioids, such as hydrocodone, morphine, and oxycodone. Abuse of these powerful painkillers takes a toll that goes far beyond individuals and their families.

**\$78.5 billion** represents the annual economic burden of opioid abuse, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This includes health care, treatment, law enforcement, and lost productivity.

Many people who misuse opioids get them from a friend or relative — often without that person’s knowledge. By removing the risk of unused opioids in your home, you can help address the devastating opioid crisis affecting so many American families.

Proper disposal of unused prescription opioids saves lives.

# CONVENIENT ANSWER TO COMMON PROBLEM

How take-back bins can help your county's health  
and welfare

BY ANNE STOKES

Medication take-back bins keep communities safe and clean. We talked to Spencer Silverstein, sustainability analyst with the City of Thousand Oaks' Public Works Department, to get an idea how they improve residents' lives.



Justin Weiss, CPSC Senior Associate, stands next to a bin installed as part of the California Drug Take-Back Program.

PHOTO BY BRAD SANBORN, CPSC SENIOR ASSOCIATE

## How do medication take-back bins benefit the communities they're in?

Keeping these medications out of the hands of the nonprescribed people who ingest them is of paramount concern, especially because of the potential for abuse and/or addiction. It can even be accidental ingestion by children or pets.

There's the potential for theft because they do have street value, so there's the nefarious criminal activity that exists with them. [And] there are the environmental impacts. Our wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove many pharmaceutical chemicals and, therefore, they are discharged to our streams and rivers, which can lead to bioaccumulation in our water supply.

## Why did Thousand Oaks implement the Med Bin program?

We were aware there was only one bin in the city for medications for 130,000 residents. That doesn't really meet the convenience standard that should exist for take-back programs.

It was becoming problematic for [the Thousand Oaks Police Department] to manage it due to financial costs. Through my contact at the TOPD, they implemented more bins throughout the rest of the Sheriff's Department and other law enforcement agencies. These bins, in addition to those at private pharmacies, increased the convenience of this take-back program.

## What kinds of materials can the bin accept?

Prescription medications, over-the-counter medications [and] any type of prescription ointments or lotions. We instruct the public to tightly seal them in their original containers. Any type of pet medications and any type

of schedule II through IV controlled substances, such as oxycodone, codeine, amphetamines.

## What types of materials can't be left in the take-back bins?

The bins are not designed for medical sharps or other types of hypodermic needles, syringes, auto-injectors like Epi-Pens. Any iodine containing medications are not meant to be disposed of in the bins, same with thermometers, mercury or non-mercury types [and] we certainly don't want anything in a compressed-gas cylinder [like] asthma inhalers.

## What are host sites responsible for doing?

I think one of the really positive points of this program is that it's user friendly. Essentially, you apply to be a host site [and] the bin is funded for you, it's dropped off and/or installed at your location, it's ready to go with all the signage and everything on it,

instructions. Once the bin is full, staff at the host site unlocks the front door, takes the box full of medications out, seals it without having to touch anything inside, orders the pick-up and you're done.

## Is there any assistance available for host sites?

CPSC (California Product Stewardship Council) is available for technical assistance after the bin is delivered to the host site and I believe they help host sites get set up in the system as well. There's an online portal for this program and I think it helps you schedule pick-ups of the boxes and it also allows you to track metrics.

To find a bin, visit [www.takebackdrugs.org](http://www.takebackdrugs.org).

For more information on what types of medications can be accepted or for take-back bin locations, visit [www.takebackdrugs.org](http://www.takebackdrugs.org).

# HOW YOU CAN HELP



## WHY MEDICATION TAKE-BACK BINS WORK

“For years, California residents have wondered what to do with leftover medications and sharps. **Throwing them in the garbage isn’t safe and flushing them down the toilet is even worse! Finally, people can dispose of medications and sharps safely and conveniently at local pharmacies (and other locations),** and I want to urge everyone to make use of these new medication take-back bins.”

**Supervisor Sheila Kuehl**  
*Los Angeles County*

“These take-back bins are a safe and convenient way for people to dispose of their unused medications, which will help fight prescription drug abuse and keep pharmaceuticals out of our water supply. **It’s a win for public health, the environment, and consumers.** As the author of SB 212, which created the first in the nation statewide drug and needle take-back program funded by the producers of these products, I am thrilled that millions of Californians throughout the state will be able to easily dispose of their unused medications.”

**Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson**  
*Santa Barbara*

“Keeping these medications out of the hands of the nonprescribed people who ingest them is of paramount concern, especially because of the potential for abuse and/or addiction. **At the end of the day, we want to keep (medications) out of the environment and out of the wrong hands – period.** If they go into the bins, we’ve accomplished that.”

**Spencer Silverstein**  
*Sustainability analyst, City of Thousand Oaks*



## Where to find a medication take-back bin?

Many independent pharmacies, hospital pharmacies, and chain pharmacies now include medication take-back bins. Other non-medical facilities, such as law enforcement offices, also offer medication take-back bins for the public to use.

To find the nearest bin to where you live, use this interactive map at:  
[www.takebackdrugs.org](http://www.takebackdrugs.org)



## How does it work?

### Follow these easy steps:

- 1 At home, if possible, remove pills and other solid medications from their containers and consolidate in a clear plastic zipper bag. Keep cream medication tightly sealed in their original containers. (NOTE: Keep medications in their child-proof container until just prior to drop off.)
- 2 Remove, mark out, or otherwise obscure personal information from solid and cream medication containers to protect your personal information. Recycle containers for solid medications in your household recycling, if applicable. See your local waste and recycling services provider’s website.
- 3 Bring zipper bag and any creams to a bin location and place in the bin. It’s that easy!



## Questions?

✉ [www.takebackdrugs.org](http://www.takebackdrugs.org) @ [info@calpsc.org](mailto:info@calpsc.org) ☎ 916.706.3420



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