
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Medicine Disposal Options for In-home Hospice Nurses and Hospice Houses

Hospice caregivers both in the home and in hospice house are often left with medicine that requires disposal when a patient dies. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on how hospice nurses can legally dispose of this medicine in a manner that prevents pollution of the environment, drug abuse and accidental poisonings.

In the home environment, the medications are the property of the patients and when the patient is deceased, the family's property. Although the hospice nurse must educate the family they are not responsible for the disposal but can assist if allowed.

Following the death of a patient under the care of an in-home hospice nurse, the nurse often offers to assist the family with the disposal of medicine associated with the deceased. Similarly, when a patient is admitted to a hospice house, the patient's family brings all of the medicine associated with the patient to the hospice house. The hospice house then assists the family by disposing the medicine when the patient dies.

The recommended approach for an **in-home hospice nurse** to dispose of medicine **at the home** is as follows (with the exception of drugs noted on the attached list, which, by recommendation of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), should be flushed down a toilet):

The nurse should perform the drug disposal in the presence of a family member or in the presence of a second health care clinician to avoid the opportunity for or accusation of drug diversion. The witness to the disposal should sign a document indicating their witnessing of the disposal.

Render the medicine unusable and place in sealable plastic bags or in single plastic container with a screw-top lid and discard in the trash after completing the following:

- Liquids: Add kitty litter, flour or used coffee grounds to the container and recap.
- Tablets and Capsules: Add water to the container followed by kitty litter, flour or used coffee grounds and recap.

- Suppositories: Unwrap and place in container before adding kitty litter, flour or used coffee grounds.
- Transdermal Patches: Using disposable gloves remove patches from the packing and cut the patch in half carefully handling it by the edges. Place the pieces in a container, add kitty litter, flour or used coffee grounds and recap.
- Medicated Ointments/Creams: Squeeze/scoop medication into a container and mix with kitty litter, flour or used coffee grounds before recapping.
- IV/SC/IM cassettes or vials: The nurse is responsible for removing the controlled drugs from the cassettes and vials and verifying their disposal (see liquids above).

The FDA advises that the following medicine be flushed down the toilet instead of thrown in the trash:

Medicine	Active Ingredient
Actiq , oral transmucosal lozenge	Fentanyl Citrate
Avinza , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
Daytrana , transdermal patch system	Methylphenidate
Demerol , tablets *	Meperidine Hydrochloride
Demerol , oral solution *	Meperidine Hydrochloride
Diastat/Diastat AcuDial , rectal gel	Diazepam
Dilaudid , tablets *	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
Dilaudid , oral liquid *	Hydromorphone Hydrochloride
Dolophine Hydrochloride , tablets *	Methadone Hydrochloride
Duragesic , patch (extended release) *	Fentanyl
Embeda , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate; Naltrexone Hydrochloride
Fentora , tablets (buccal)	Fentanyl Citrate
Kadian , capsules (extended release)	Morphine Sulfate
Methadone Hydrochloride , oral solution *	Methadone Hydrochloride
Methadose , tablets *	Methadone Hydrochloride
Morphine Sulfate , tablets (immediate release) *	Morphine Sulfate
Morphine Sulfate , oral solution *	Morphine Sulfate
MS Contin , tablets (extended release) *	Morphine Sulfate
Onsolis , soluble film (buccal)	Fentanyl Citrate
Opana , tablets (immediate release)	Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
Opana ER , tablets (extended release)	Oxymorphone Hydrochloride
Oramorph SR , tablets (sustained release)	Morphine Sulfate
Oxycontin , tablets (extended release) *	Oxycodone Hydrochloride
Percocet , tablets *	Acetaminophen; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
Percodan , tablets *	Aspirin; Oxycodone Hydrochloride
Xyrem , oral solution	Sodium Oxybate

While the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) generally discourages the disposal of medicine via flushing down a toilet, it recognizes that other more acute public health and safety interests must be considered. This is especially true for the disposal of medicine associated with hospice patients at the time of death because of the quantity of medicine that may require disposal and ability of the public to track deaths in media publications. For this reason, NHDES supports FDA's recommendations above at this time for hospice patients. NHDES along with the other New England states have provided the US Drug Enforcement Agency with recommendations on how to amend its regulations in order to hopefully improve [medicine disposal options](#) that are more environmentally protective.

The recommended approach for disposing of medicine in a **hospice house** is the same as described above with one important exception. Specific state regulations pertain to how controlled substances can be disposed of in an in-patient care institution. Partially used/dose, patient-specific dispensed controlled substances may be destroyed by one licensed healthcare professional and a witness. Dispensed patient specific medications that are not partially used can only be disposed of by the consultant pharmacist authorized by the Board. The consultant pharmacist will need to be sure that he or she maintains a record of the controlled drugs destroyed as required by administrative rule Ph 707.03(a).

The disposal instructions above are meant to apply to only the disposal of patient specific dispensed medicine that is used by a hospice patient. If an entity offers to collect, store and dispose of medicine not associated with the hospice patient, this activity would be subject to extensive federal and state laws and regulations.

For More Information

Please contact the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513 or dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov or visit our website at www.des.nh.gov.

If you have specific questions regarding the disposal of medicine in hospice centers or in in-home hospice settings, contact James M. Queenan of the New Hampshire Board of Pharmacy at (603) 271-4872 or james.queenan@nh.gov. More information on medicine disposal can be found at www.nh.gov/medsafety.

Note: This fact sheet is accurate as of August 2019. Statutory or regulatory changes or the availability of additional information after this date may render this information inaccurate or incomplete.