

Test your practical understanding on promoting safe medication disposal in clinical practice

1. Take Back Programs for safe medication disposal are only available twice a year, usually the last Saturday in April and October.
 - a. True
 - b. False

More and more pharmacies and law enforcement facilities are available all year round for safe disposal of prescription and OTC medications and supplements in a secured receptacle. Most South Carolinians have at least one permanent Take Back location within a 20 mile radius of their zip code. DEA National Prescription Drug Take Back Day occurs twice a year (April and October). Law enforcement is always present at DEA-sponsored Take Back sites and responsible for medication collection at these biannual events. Medication drop off at DEA Take Back events and permanent Take Back collection sites is anonymous. (Correct answer is B).

2. Take Back Programs are the preferred method of medication disposal.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Take Back Programs offer a safe, free way to dispose of medications and supplements and prevent accidental or intentional misuse of unused, unwanted, or expired medications. There may be dosage form restrictions (e.g., inhalers) at the collection site and none accept needles/sharps, thermometers, hydrogen peroxide, or illegal drugs. Some pharmacies may offer a Mail Back option to deliver medications to a safe disposal program (likely a cost for postage-paid envelope). (Correct answer is A).

3. The FDA recommends flushing ALL unused, unwanted, or expired medications IF a Take Back Program is unavailable or impractical.
 - a. True
 - b. False

The FDA recommends flushing a small number of controlled substances (mostly opioids) down the toilet IF a Take Back option is not readily available or impractical due to risk of overdose from accidental ingestion or misuse. The FDA believes that this risk far exceeds the risk to the water supply and the environment. Any patches (used and unused) need to be folded in half with sticky sides together before flushing. The flushable medication list can be found on the FDA website (search for "medication disposal"). (Correct answer is B).

4. All of the following steps for proper disposal of medication in the household trash without commercially available devices are TRUE except:
 - a. Crush tablets and capsules and place into a re-sealable, plastic bag or container.

- b. Mix used coffee grounds, cat litter, dirt, or other nasty substance into bag/container to discourage accidental ingestion or intentional misuse; then seal it.
- c. Put the well-sealed bag or container with medication mixture in the household trash (NOT recycling).
- d. Black out all prescription label information with a permanent marker or scratch off/remove labeling (to protect everyone); then throw the empty bottle/packaging away (recycle if possible).

It is important NOT to crush tablets or capsules to eliminate the risk of exposure to the drug through breathing in medication dust or skin contact. Crushing long-acting formulations can release a high dose of medication and pose an even greater risk to people and pets (Correct answer is A).