



Guidance on Safe Storage of Medications and Substances for Recreational Use During COVID-19

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has caused us to change our day-to-day routines to keep ourselves and our communities safe. As we spend more time at home, it is important to remember to stay safe inside. To reduce trips outside the home, many people are getting medications or recreational substances (such as drugs and alcohol) in larger amounts. If you keep medications or recreational substances at home, they should be stored safely and out of a child's reach. Children are more likely to be at home during the pandemic, and may accidentally take medications or recreational substances that they find in the home. This can lead to medical emergencies like drug poisoning. Below are some tips to help you store medications and recreational substances safely.

Storing medication and other substances safely

- Keep your medications organized and make sure they have not expired. Keep medication in its original packaging and be careful to check labels for expiration date and proper dosing instructions before taking.
- Secure bottles and make sure they are closed properly. Keep medications in a cabinet out of reach of children.
- Controlled substances like opioids, benzodiazepines and sleeping medications can be harmful if accidentally ingested, especially by children. If possible, keep these locked away.
 - Use a space that has a built-in lock such as a desk drawer or filing cabinet.
 - Secure an existing drawer or cabinet with a padlock if there is not a built in lock.
 - Purchase small lock boxes online.
 - Use child locks on drawers or cabinets if young children are present in the home.
 - If you are unable to keep medications locked up, keep them out of accessible or communal areas where they will be easily found.
- If you take opioids such as tramadol, oxycodone, hydrocodone, methadone, heroin or fentanyl, be sure to have naloxone available in case of an accidental overdose. Naloxone is a medication that will temporarily block the effects of opioids, allowing someone experiencing an overdose to breathe and receive medical attention if necessary. Naloxone is available for free and without a prescription, and is easily administered as a nasal spray. Make sure others in the household know where the naloxone is kept and how to use it in case of an accidental overdose.
 - If you are unsure where to get or be trained to use naloxone, visit NYC Well's naloxone page at nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/naloxone.
- If you use other substances like cocaine, cannabis, mushrooms or crystal meth, be sure to keep those locked up, and out of sight and reach of children. If you use additional

supplies to consume substances (including syringes, lighters, pipes and other equipment) keep those locked up as well.

- If you use cannabis, be aware that edible cannabis products can be mistaken for regular snacks or candy. Cannabis can be harmful to children if accidentally eaten and could lead to hospitalization. Even relatively small amounts of edible cannabis products may contain enough of the chemical THC to be harmful to children. Be sure to keep these products separate and locked away, especially if children are in the home.
- Keep alcohol locked away or out of reach of children. If possible, keep separate from other beverages and food items consumed by others in the household.

Safe Disposal

- If you need to dispose of expired or unwanted substances, first check to see if there are disposal instructions on the medication label.
- To find a disposal site in your area, visit nyc.gov/dsny. Call first to ensure they are open and taking drop-offs.
- If you are unable to go to a disposal site, mix unwanted substances with an inedible substance such as dirt, cat litter or coffee grounds. Secure the mixture in a sealed container and put in household trash. Be sure to remove any personal information from prescription labels when disposing of bottles.
- If you use syringes to take prescribed medication or drugs for recreational use, be sure to dispose of used syringes in a secure FDA-cleared medical waste container (e.g. sharps container). Keep the container out of reach of others until ready for disposal. If you do not have a sharps container, use a hard plastic container such as a laundry detergent bottle. Secure lid with tape and write "SHARPS" in clear letters on the bottle, then place with your regular trash (not recycling). For more information on how to safely dispose of a sharps container, visit [NYC's medical waste site](#).

If you need services relating to substance use, NYC Well is available 24/7 to provide support and referrals, including for substance use treatment. Visit nyc.gov/nycwell, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355) or text "Well" to 65173.