



EXPIRED MEDICINES CAN BE RISKY.

Taking out-of-date drugs carries certain risks.



Out with the old! Be it the fresh start of a new year or a spring cleaning, consumers are encouraged to take stock of what has surpassed its usefulness. Medicines are no exception.

In 1979, the FDA began requiring an expiration date on prescription and over-the-counter medicines. The expiration date is meant to show that the product is safe to use and will work as intended.

The expiration date can be found on the label or stamped onto the bottle or carton, sometimes following “EXP.” It is important to know the expiration date on your medicine. Using expired medical products is risky and possibly harmful to your health.

Expired medical products can be less effective or risky due to a change in chemical composition or a decrease in strength.

Certain expired medications are at risk of bacterial growth and sub-potent antibiotics can fail to treat infections, leading to more serious illnesses and antibiotic resistance. Once the expiration date has passed there is no guarantee that the medicine will be safe and effective.

If your medicine has expired, do not use it.

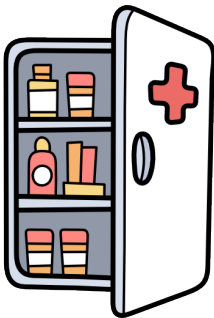
Failing to safely dispose of old medications can lead to dangerous drugs ending up in the wrong hands. The CDC reports that thousands of children end up in emergency rooms each year because they got into medicines while an adult wasn't looking.

Expired medicines are not just a risk to the person for which they were prescribed. They can injure children and pets if taken by mistake. Proper disposal of unneeded medicines is essential.

What to do with expired meds

First, read the medicine's label and follow any specific disposal instructions that may be included. A drug take-back program, if available, is the preferred way to dispose of expired, unwanted, or unused medicine.

At the Nisqually Tribal Health & Wellness Center, we have two "MedSafe" disposal stations. One is located in Behavioral Health and the other is in the Pharmacy waiting area. Expired and unwanted medications can be safely dropped into these "MedSafes" for safe and proper disposal.



A place for everything

Proper storage is one way to help make sure your medicines will remain safe and effective up to their expiration date. Be sure to read the label to see if there are specific storage instructions for your medicine. Certain medicines need to be stored in the refrigerator and others cannot be exposed to extreme temperatures.

Improper storage can contribute to decreased effectiveness and diminished shelf life. For most medicines, to help ensure the proper shelf life of your medicine, it is better to store medicine in a cool, dry place such as a dresser drawer, storage box, closet shelf, or kitchen cabinet.

When storing medicine in a kitchen cabinet make sure that it is away from hot appliances and the sink due to changing temperatures and humidity, which can affect the medicine.

When storing medicine in a high traffic area, care should be taken to prevent access by children at risk of accidental poisoning or others who may be tempted to take for abuse/misuse.

Remember to store medicines properly and don't use expired medicines - it's not worth the risk!

This article adapted from: <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/special-features/dont-be-tempted-use-expired-medicines>