

# OPIOID EPIDEMIC:

## Tips You Can Use



In 2019, 876 people in South Carolina died from opioid overdoses and the number of deaths keeps increasing each year. These aren't just numbers, they're people in our community, people we know – brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and friends in need of our support and compassion. Act now to safely store and dispose of any opioids to help protect our community from misuse, addiction, overdose, and related death.



Although extremely addictive, opioids are still prescribed for the treatment of pain after surgery, an injury, cancer, back pain or osteoarthritis. Common types of opioids include oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), morphine, and methadone.

Knowing how to safely store or get rid of medication especially opioids can save lives! Unused medication can be harmful if taken by someone other than the person the prescription was written for by the doctor. A child or pet can be poisoned or die if they accidentally discover and take or eat medicine. Leftover or expired medicine is usually found in the home in bathrooms, kitchens, bedrooms, and even purses. Make sure you safely store or dispose of unused or expired medication before it hurts someone you love.

## REMEMBER THESE TIPS:

### SAFE STORAGE

All prescribed medications should be stored safely and securely. Pills should never be loose or out of the pharmacy container. Don't share your medications with anyone. Keep them:

- Out of sight and away from children and pets
- Stored in a locked cabinet or on a high shelf



### SAFE DISPOSAL

Find safe and secure drug drop boxes by asking at local sites. Make sure to remove the label or mark out your personal information before you drop off your medications. Sites include:

- Pharmacy or hospital
- Sherriff's office
- Police station
- Public Safety office



**For a list of collection sites, go to [justplainkillers.com](http://justplainkillers.com) or to [holdoutthelifeline.org](http://holdoutthelifeline.org).**

If a collection site or drug dropbox can't be found nearby, you can safely get rid of medication by following these steps at home:

1. **Don't flush the medicine down the toilet.**
2. **Place the unused or expired medication in a plastic bag that can be sealed.**
3. **Mix the medication in the bag with dirt, cat litter or used coffee grounds.**
4. **Seal the bag and put it in the trash.**
5. **Tear off or scratch out any personal information from the prescription label and throw out the container.**



Following these easy steps to store and/or dispose of prescriptions help keep your family and friends safe from opioids and other medications. This is your opportunity to protect and show support for those we care about and want to help. People struggling with opioid addiction may also need someone to listen. Make sure to show compassion and understanding when assisting someone addicted to opioids. Avoid “you” statements and judgmental comments. Focus on your concern for their health and try to refer them to a licensed counselor where they can receive the best treatment for their addiction.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:



- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/index.html](https://cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/index.html)
- SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS): [www.justplainkillers.com](http://www.justplainkillers.com)
- U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA): [www.FDA.gov/DrugDisposal](http://www.FDA.gov/DrugDisposal)
- Hold Out The Lifeline: A Mission To Families: [www.hotlifeline.org/safe-medication](http://www.hotlifeline.org/safe-medication)

Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour course that teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone in crisis. If you or someone you know would like to learn more about the Mental Health First Aid training, please visit [www.holdoutthelifeline.org/mental-health-first-aid](http://www.holdoutthelifeline.org/mental-health-first-aid).



**SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services**  
**[www.daodas.sc.gov](http://www.daodas.sc.gov)**



**Hold Out the Lifeline: A Mission To Families**

*Each One Can Reach One*

803.461.3201 [hotlifeline.org](http://hotlifeline.org)



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