

## Lock Them Up or Throw Them Out

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Our country is dealing with an epidemic of opioid abuse. Dependency occurs for 1 in 7 patients prescribed opioids for more than a week. If you are thinking “not my child” speak to a grieving parent who has lost a child to opioids. We can prevent gateway use by taking simple preventative measures.

Prescriptions of controlled substances to children and adolescents has risen significantly, along with visits to emergency rooms for non-medical use of and death from opioids within this age group. The source to obtain these drugs most often is surprising- your drug cabinet! Not a dealer, but from home or a peer’s home. Thirty to 45% of adolescents who take opioids for non-medical use are consuming their own prescriptions.

Studies reveal that unsafe storage of controlled substances in homes is common, often arising from parents believing they have safely placed medications away. Children in these studies were fully aware of these pseudo safe spots- ‘mom’s room drawer’, ‘dad’s closet’, etc.

Improperly stored medications allow for:

- Nonmedical use by preadolescents and adolescents
- Accidental overdose by children
- Diversion use by adolescents outside the family

To safely store needed medications and over the counter medications, place them in a locked secure location, using pill boxes for one-week supplies.

Dispense of expired or no longer used medications as follows:

- Do not flush- most medications are not removed by water waste treatments, so they end up in our water supply and food chain
- Do not throw in the trash- children, pets and people can find them
- Do not crush pills to disguise before disposal, there can be skin and inhalation of pill dust
- Do bring your medications to the local pharmacies listed below for disposal. Keep them in the correct pill bottle with the label; the pharmacy will dispose of the pills and destroy the labels.
- Only as a last resort, mix the medication in coffee grounds or

used kitty litter, then dispose in trash; however, these medications can still be found by others or enter our ecosystem

The research is clear that our youth's typical introduction to opioid use is from their own home or that of a peer. With this understanding, please consider cleaning out the medicine cabinet and locking them up.

Local Pharmacies:

I Care Pharmacy

Walgreens- Kaliste Saloom and  
Ambassador

Teche Pharmacy

Walgreens in Opelousas