



# THE BEACON

Wellness Edition - May 2022

## Where and How to Dispose of Unused Medicines

Is your medicine cabinet full of expired drugs or medications you no longer use? The best way to dispose of your expired, unwanted, or unused medicines is through a drug take back program - or you can do it at home.

### Drug Take Back Programs

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) sponsors National Prescription Drug Take Back Day in communities nationwide. Many communities also have their own drug take back programs. Check with your local law enforcement officials to find a location near you or with the DEA to find a DEA-authorized collector in your community. You can also check with your pharmacist for additional information.

### How to Dispose of Medicines at Home

When a take back option is not easily available, there are two ways to dispose of medicines at home, depending on the drug.

**Flushing medicines:** Because some medicines could be especially harmful to others, they have specific directions to flush them down the sink or toilet when they are no longer needed, and a take-back option is not available.

**Disposing medicines in household trash:** If a take back program is not available, almost all medicines, except those on the FDA flush list, can be thrown into your household trash. These include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs in pills, liquids, drops, patches, and creams.

### Follow these steps:

1. Remove the drugs from their original containers and mix them with something undesirable, such as used coffee grounds, dirt, or cat litter. This makes it less appealing and unrecognizable to children and pets.
2. Put the mixture in something you can close (a re-sealable zipper storage bag, empty can, etc.) to prevent the drug from leaking or spilling out.
3. Throw the container in the garbage.
4. Scratch out all personal information on the empty medicine packaging to protect your identity and privacy. Throw the packaging away.

### Flushing Drugs and the Water Supply

Some people wonder if it's okay to flush certain medicines when a take back option is not easily available. There are concerns about the small levels of drugs that may be found in surface water, such as rivers, lakes, and in drinking water supplies.

The FDA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency take the concerns of flushing certain medicines in the environment seriously. Still, there has been no sign of environmental effects caused by flushing recommended drugs. In fact, the FDA published a paper to assess this concern, finding negligible risk of environmental effects caused by flushing recommended drugs.

Source: U.S. Food & Drug Administration ([www.FDA.gov](http://www.FDA.gov))

### Do you have a question or concern?

If there is a topic you would like us to cover in an upcoming newsletter, please contact us at [beacon@reschini.com](mailto:beacon@reschini.com) with "Newsletter" in the subject line, along with a detailed description of a topic or question you would like to be addressed.

## How to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

It's good to add more fruits and vegetables to your diet for a variety of health benefits, including to lose weight. Whether you cook at home or eat out, try these easy ways to add more colorful, nutritious, and delicious vegetables and fruits into your snacks and meals.

- Add bananas, raisins, or berries to your cereal.
- Drink a small (6-ounce) glass of juice. Be sure it's 100% fruit or vegetable juice without excess sodium or sugar.
- Have a fruit or vegetable salad with lunch.
- Put vegetables on your sandwich, such as cucumber, sprouts, tomato, lettuce, or avocado.
- Have a piece of fruit or raw veggie sticks instead of chips.
- Keep raw veggie sticks handy, such as green or red bell peppers, green beans, celery, or carrots.
- Carry dried fruit, such as raisins, dates, or dried apricots, in your purse or pocket.
- Have any type of fresh fruit: grapes, apple, banana, orange, kiwi, etc.
- On hot days, munch on a bowl of frozen fruits or vegetables, such as grapes, peas, or bananas.
- Add a side of steamed or microwaved vegetables – frozen veggies are fine!

Source: American Heart Association ([www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org))

### Recipe of the Month - Penne with Chicken and Asparagus

#### Ingredients

- 1 (16 oz.) package dried penne pasta
- 5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 skinless chicken breast halves- cut into cubes
- 1 bunch asparagus spears, cut into 1-inch pieces
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Garlic powder to taste
- ½ cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese

#### Nutrition (per serving)

*Makes 4 servings*

- Calories - 332 kcal
- Fat - 10.9 g
- Carbs - 43.3 g
- Protein - 16.7 g
- Cholesterol - 19.6 mg
- Sodium - 68.7 mg



#### Directions

1. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to boil. Add pasta, and cook until al dente, about 8 to 10 minutes. Drain, and set aside.
2. Warm 3 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Stir in chicken, and season with salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Cook until chicken is cooked through and browned, about 5 minutes. Remove chicken to paper towels.
3. Pour chicken broth into the skillet. Then stir in asparagus, garlic, and a pinch more garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Cover, and steam until the asparagus is just tender, about 5 to 10 minutes. Return chicken to the skillet, and warm through.
4. Stir chicken mixture into pasta, and mix well. Let sit about 5 minutes. Drizzle with remaining olive oil, stir again, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

## Nurtured by Nature

Be honest: How much time do you spend staring at a screen each day? Our increasing reliance on technology, combined with a global trend toward urban living, means many of us are spending even less time outdoors. From a stroll through a city park to a day spent hiking in the wilderness, exposure to nature has been linked to a host of benefits, including improved attention, lower stress, better mood, reduced risk of psychiatric disorders, and even upticks in empathy and cooperation.

There is mounting evidence that nature has benefits for both physical and psychological human well-being. You can boost your mood just by walking in nature, even in urban nature. And the sense of connection you have with the natural world seems to contribute to happiness even when you're not physically immersed in nature.

### Cognitive Benefits

Spending time in nature can act as a balm for our busy brains. Both correlational and experimental research have shown that interacting with nature has cognitive benefits. Experiments have found that being exposed to natural environments improves working memory, cognitive flexibility, and attentional control, while exposure to urban environments is linked to attention deficits.

Experimental findings show how impressive nature's healing powers can be - just a few moments of green can perk up a tired brain. Even the sounds of nature may be recuperative. People who listened to nature sounds like crickets chirping and waves crashing felt better than those who listened to urban sounds like traffic and the clatter of a busy café.

### Nature and Happiness

Spending time in nature has cognitive benefits, but it also has emotional and existential benefits that go beyond just being able to solve arithmetic problems more quickly. There is also evidence that contact with nature is associated with increases in happiness, subjective well-being, positive affect, positive social interactions, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life, as well as decreases in mental distress.

There is even evidence that images of nature can be beneficial. Any exposure to nature - in person or via video - can lead to improvements in attention, positive emotions, and the ability to reflect on a life problem. But the effects are stronger among people who actually spent time outside. Nature might also make us nicer to other people as well as to the planet.

### Additional Resources

- [American Heart Association \(www.heart.org\)](http://www.heart.org)
- [American Psychological Association \(www.apa.org\)](http://www.apa.org)
- [U.S. Food & Drug Administration \(www.FDA.gov\)](http://www.FDA.gov)

### Experience vs. Connection

With so many benefits linked to nature, people naturally wonder: How much time outside is enough? People who spend at least two recreational hours in nature a week display significantly greater health and well-being. The amount of time one spends in nature isn't the only element to consider—it's also beneficial to feel connected to the natural world even when you're stuck at a desk. Researchers call this feeling by a variety of names, including nature relatedness, connectedness to nature, and inclusion of nature in self. Whatever you call it, connectedness to nature seems to benefit mood and mental health.

In fact, nature might help to buffer the effects of loneliness or social isolation. Social isolation is typically associated with worse subjective well-being. But researchers found that when people with low social connectedness had high levels of nearby nature, they reported high levels of well-being. There are people who don't necessarily want to spend their time with others, but they feel connected to the natural environment, and that can enhance their well-being.

### Green and Blue Spaces

It's clear that getting outside is good for us. Now, scientists are working to determine what types of environments are best. Much attention has gone to green spaces, but a variety of marine and freshwater environments, referred to as blue spaces, are also good for well-being.

There may also be value in trekking to remote locations. People tend to feel more connection with nature and more restored after visiting rural and coastal locations than spending time in urban green spaces. Areas deemed to be "high environmental quality"—such as nature reserves and protected habitats—are also more beneficial than areas with low biodiversity.

But there's an important caveat, if you have a break from work and you've only got half an hour, then a wild remote place is no use to you at all. Urban parks and trees also produce positive outcomes. Just like a little exercise is better than none and we should take advantage of green and blue spaces wherever and whenever we can. There is urgency in fostering these connections. While people benefit from their connection with the natural world, the environment also benefits when people feel connected and committed to caring for the Earth—and between climate change and habitat loss, the planet is in serious need of some care.

Source: American Psychological Association ([www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org))

### App of the Month - Sworkit Kids



*Sworkit Kids is an exercise and fitness app aimed at students in elementary and middle school, though it can be used for students of all ages and even adults. It is a kid version of an adult workout tool that provides video and verbal instructions in how to complete age-appropriate exercises.*

*This app is available for free on iPhone and Android devices.*