



## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Be Safe, Responsible When Cleaning Out the Medicine Cabinet

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today we talk about safe, responsible ways to dispose of unneeded or expired medication in a safe, responsible manner.***

In a recent Brain Boost, we encouraged you to do a spring cleaning of all the things that might be cluttering your brain. We trust you're enjoying a calmer, more efficient way of life as a result. Today, we have a more traditional clean-up task for you: clearing out the prescription medication you won't or shouldn't use.

First, you might wonder why it's so important to dispose of unused or expired medication safely. Most drugs, including the over-the-counter variety, that sit in medicine cabinets, nightstands, or kitchen cabinets have the potential for misuse or abuse by family members, friends, or visitors. Even some medications for pets can be misused.

Some facts from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration concerning the misuse of prescription medication include:

- Pharmaceutical drugs can be just as dangerous as street drugs when taken without a doctor's supervision.
- The non-medical use of prescription drugs ranks second to marijuana as the most common form of drug abuse in the U.S.
- The majority of teenagers who abuse prescription drugs get those drugs from friends or family.
- Unused medication discarded unsafely in the trash can be illegally resold or abused.

As you might imagine, there is more to discarding prescription medication than simply tossing pill or liquid medication bottles into the trash can. *See the box below for seven steps to safely dispose of medication, if you want to do it yourself. Follow all the steps to produce a safe container of discarded medication.* Unsafe disposal can have serious effects. In landfills, medications may

leach into and contaminate the soil. Never flush medication meant for you or your pets. Research has shown flushed medications flow into our water supply. They negatively impact the water we drink and fish we eat.

Another way is to use at-home drug disposal kits available from companies like DisposeRx and Detera. You may also participate in the National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on April 30. [Click here](#) to find a location near you that will accept and dispose of the medication.

Locally, Drug Free Manatee is partnering with Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine to provide a new community-based program called S.M.A.R.T. (Senior Medication Awareness Retrieval Treatment) Options. The program offers information on safe medication disposal options and education on addiction prevention and alternatives to opioid use for pain management in a casual social setting. Find out more about Drug Free Manatee [here](#).

Clean up now and keep the medications you don't need out of the hands of others.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

*If you choose to get rid of prescription medications yourself, follow these seven steps (and four don'ts) from the Florida Health Department for safe disposal:*

- **KEEP THE CONTAINER.** Even when discarding medication, keep it in the original container. This allows the contents to be identified if they are accidentally ingested.
- **PROTECT PRIVACY.** Scratch out your name and prescription number for safety.
- **SOAK YOUR PILLS.** Add water or soda to prescription pills to begin dissolving them.
- **MAKE IT INEDIBLE.** For liquid medication, add cat litter, dirt or cayenne pepper to discourage ingestion.
- **WRAP IT UP.** Also for liquids, close the lid of the medication and secure it with duct tape or packing tape.
- **HIDE IT AWAY.** Place the medication bottle in a container like a coffee can or plastic laundry bottle. Tape the outer container closed.
- **NOW THROW AWAY.** Dispose of the container in the trash.

#### **DO NOT:**

- Give the drugs to anyone else.
- Flush the drugs down the toilet.
- Place medication in the trash without disguising it.
- Put the medication container in the recycling bin.

**BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection

- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

**About the Brain Health Initiative ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))**

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).