Workers' Comp

Ask The Pharmacist: Safe Drug Disposal Methods in Workers' Compensation

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Are there rules or recommendations for opioid disposal?

Often prescribed for moderate-to-severe pain, opioids can be highly effective medications, they can also be associated with serious risks including the potential for abuse and addiction. Patients may not be aware of the dangers of keeping unused opioids in the home and the importance of safe disposal of these medications.

Opioids should only be taken as directed since misuse or diversion of these products can be illegal, extremely harmful and even deadly. Prescription opioid misuse is one the of the most common types of illegal drug use in the United States. Many people using opioid analgesics (drugs such as morphine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone) for non-medical reasons first gain access to them from family or friends.

To reduce the chance of accidental or intentional opioid misuse, medications should be stored out of reach of children and pets in a safe place, preferably somewhere locked to prevent other family members and visitors from accessing them. When there is no longer a medical need for them, unused prescription opioids should be removed and disposed of as soon as possible.

Medicine take back options are the best way to safely dispose of unused or expired medications. There are generally two kinds of take back options: permanent collection sites and periodic take back events. Authorized collection sites may be retail, hospital, or clinical pharmacies and law enforcement facilities. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) periodically hosts National Prescription Drug Take Back events where temporary collection sites are set up in communities nationwide for safe disposal of prescription drugs.

If the patient does not have a drug take back location near them, the next best option is to immediately flush the unused or expired opioids down the toilet. Any drug that contains the word morphine, oxycodone or hydrocodone is on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) "flush list." Medicines on the list are those

sought-after for their misuse and/or potential and those that can result in death from one dose if inappropriately taken.

The FDA has additional resources regarding public education around properly disposing of prescription medicines and empowering individuals to be part of the solution of the opioid crisis that may be found online by visiting their website.

This information is meant to serve as a general overview, and any specific questions or concerns should be more fully reviewed with your health care professional such as the prescribing doctor or dispensing pharmacist.

Do you have a workers' compensation or auto related pharmacy question? Send us an email at AskThePharmacist@enlyte.com.

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References

Safe Opioid Disposal - Remove the Risk Outreach Toolkit

FDA Considers New Approach to Improve Safe Disposal of Prescription Opioid Analgesics, Decrease Unnecessary Exposure to Unused Medication

Drug Disposal: FDA's Flush List for Certain Medicines



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