

Practical Advice for Staying Safe with Controlled Prescription Medications in Your Home

By Dr. Carol J Boyd, PhD, RN, FAAN, FIAAN

As adults age, harmful events related to medications become one of the most common safety problems they experience. In fact, between 75% and 96% of older patients admit that they frequently make mistakes with their medications.* These errors might include taking the wrong dose, taking medication belonging to someone else, storing it in poor conditions, and more. Older adults are also more likely to be taking multiple controlled medications, which are drugs that are very effective when used appropriately, but which can cause dependency.**

After years of research on this topic, Dr. Carol J. Boyd, a Professor at the University of Michigan School of Nursing and Founding Director of the Center for the Study of Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Health (DASH Center), has developed a helpful way to remember how to safely take, store, and dispose of these controlled medications for yourself and your loved ones, through a consumer-friendly, educational brochure and video called the *ABCs of Prescription Drug Safety*.

Tips for Safely Taking and Keeping Your Prescription Medications

To keep you, and your family safe, follow the *ABCs of Prescription Drug Safety*.

As advised: Use medications as directed by your health care provider. Read all directions. Do not take more than prescribed or more often than prescribed. Mixing drugs like narcotics, anti-anxiety, and/or alcohol increases the risk of overdose and addiction.

Be aware: Don't share! People have died or become addicted by using another person's prescribed medications such as those listed on the sidebar. It is also against the law to share these medications with others.

Control: Count and control your pills.

Be responsible and store medications in a secure location to avoid theft and limit misuse of leftover medications. Know how many pills you have and count them regularly to see if any are missing.

Dispose: Remove unused or expired medications responsibly. Either find "Take-back" locations or remove the pills from their original container(s) and mix with cat litter or used coffee grounds, and throw in the trash. Black out or remove identifiable information from the original container, and discard or recycle. Avoid flushing medications down a toilet

*<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31063401/>

**Some medications are labeled "controlled" because they have a greater likelihood of causing a physical or emotional addiction. When taken as directed, these prescribed medications do not generally cause adults to become addicted.



Prescription Drugs with the Potential for Addiction If Not Taken Properly***

Narcotics

Hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), methadone (Dolophine), meperidine (Demerol), oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet), fentanyl (Sublimaze, Duragesic), morphine, codeine, products containing codeine, and buprenorphine.

Non-Narcotics

Benzphetamine (Didrex), phendimetrazine, ketamine, and anabolic steroids such as Depo-Testosterone.

Stimulants

Amphetamine, d-amphetamine (Dexedrine, Adderall), methamphetamine (Desoxyn), and methylphenidate (Ritalin).

Anti-Anxiety and Sleep Medications

Alprazolam (Xanax), carisoprodol (Soma), clonazepam (Klonopin), clorazepate (Tranxene), diazepam (Valium), lorazepam (Ativan), midazolam (Versed), temazepam (Restoril), triazolam (Halcion), and zolpidem (Ambien).

Cough Syrups

Cough preparations containing codeine (Robitussin AC, Phenergan with codeine or hydrocodone) and ezogabine.

Other Medications

Amobarbital, glutethimide, and pentobarbital.

*** All brand names listed above are owned by their respective trademark holders.

For more information on the Center for the Study of Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Health (DASH Center) and the *ABCs of Prescription Drug Safety* brochure and video, click [here](#).