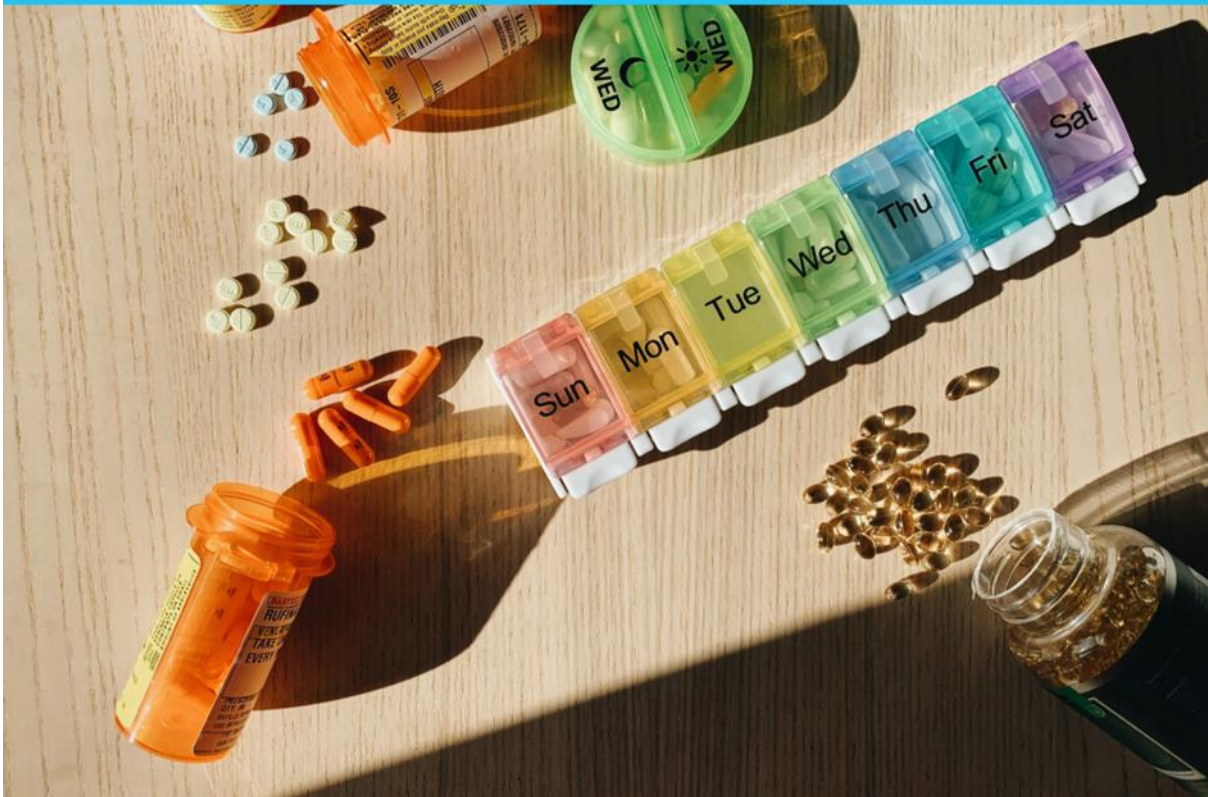


# MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA HOME DRUG SAFETY TOOLKIT



How to Use This Toolkit .....	2
Montgomery County Home Drug Safety Data Report.....	3
Medicine Storage Tips by Age.....	7
Sample Social Media Content:.....	11
Poison Control Center Resources .....	12

24-hour hotline  
1-800-222-1222

2716 South Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19146-2305  
Administration 215-590-2003 • Fax 215-590-4419  
[www.chop.edu/centers-programs/poison-control-center](http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/poison-control-center)

## How to Use This Toolkit

Dear Community Partner,

The Poison Control Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) is reaching out to share an important resource designed to support the safety and well-being of the individuals and families you serve.

This toolkit is specifically focused on residents of Montgomery County, where unused or expired medications in the home continue to pose risks for accidental poisoning, misuse, and other harm. Many of our neighbors are unaware of safe storage and disposal practices, making this a crucial area for outreach and education.

To help address these concerns, we are pleased to provide you with our Medication Safety and Safe Disposal Toolkit, specifically developed for use throughout Montgomery County. This toolkit includes practical materials your organization can share directly with the individuals and communities you support, such as:

- A report that details calls to the Poison Control Center from Montgomery County
- Medication safety tips for different age groups
- Sample posts addressing medication safety for your social media channels
- Links to a variety of resources provided by the Poison Control Center @ CHOP

Our mission at the Poison Control Center is to prevent poisoning and save lives through education, advocacy, and direct support. Organizations like yours—community centers, medical practices, faith-based groups, and educational institutions—play an essential role in sharing vital prevention information with Montgomery County residents.

Yours truly,

The Poison Control Center at CHOP

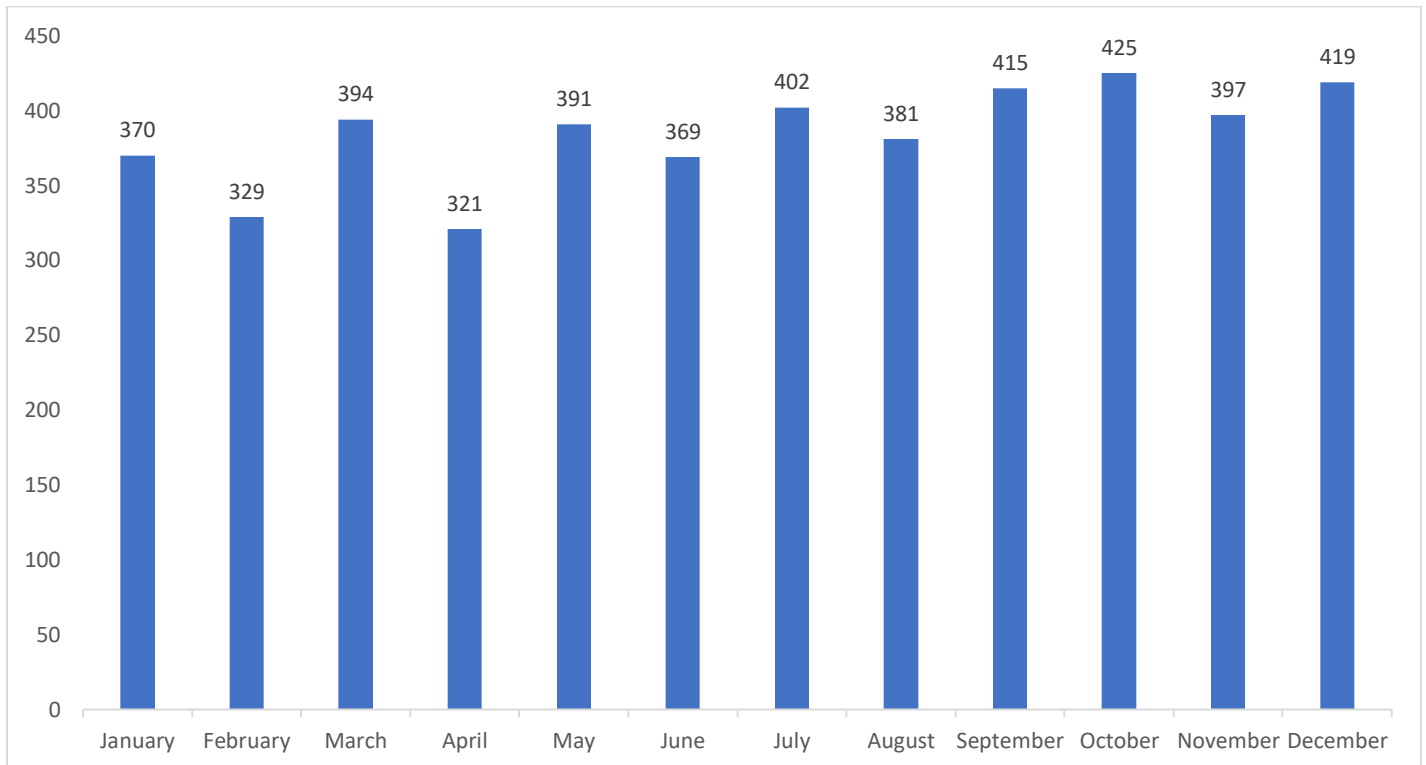
# Montgomery County Home Drug Safety Data Report

## Poisonings in Montgomery County, PA

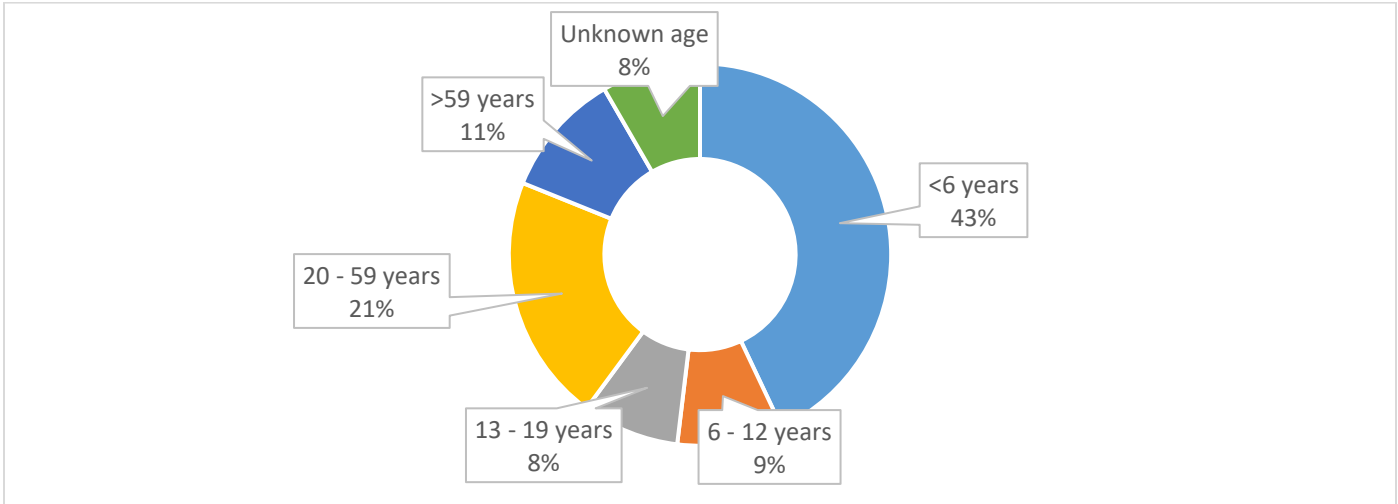
The Poison Control Center (PCC) at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia is the official poison center servicing all of the residents of Montgomery County, PA, along with 9 million people in Eastern PA and Delaware. The PCC maintains an awareness of pertinent trends that impact the community. The following information from the center offers an important perspective that helps justify the creation of the training program.

In the year 2025, there were over 4,800 cases reported to the PCC from Montgomery County, 4,613 of which were reports of potential poisoning events (i.e., exposures). The number of exposures reported by month varies (Figure 1), with the most occurring in October. The month with the lowest case volume was April. It is important to highlight the fact that individuals of all ages are serviced by the PCC (Figure 2). Children under the age of 6 years comprise the largest demographic (43%), followed by adults between ages 20 and 59 years (21%).

**Figure 1.** Number of exposure cases from Montgomery County, PA, reported to the Poison Control Center at CHOP in 2025

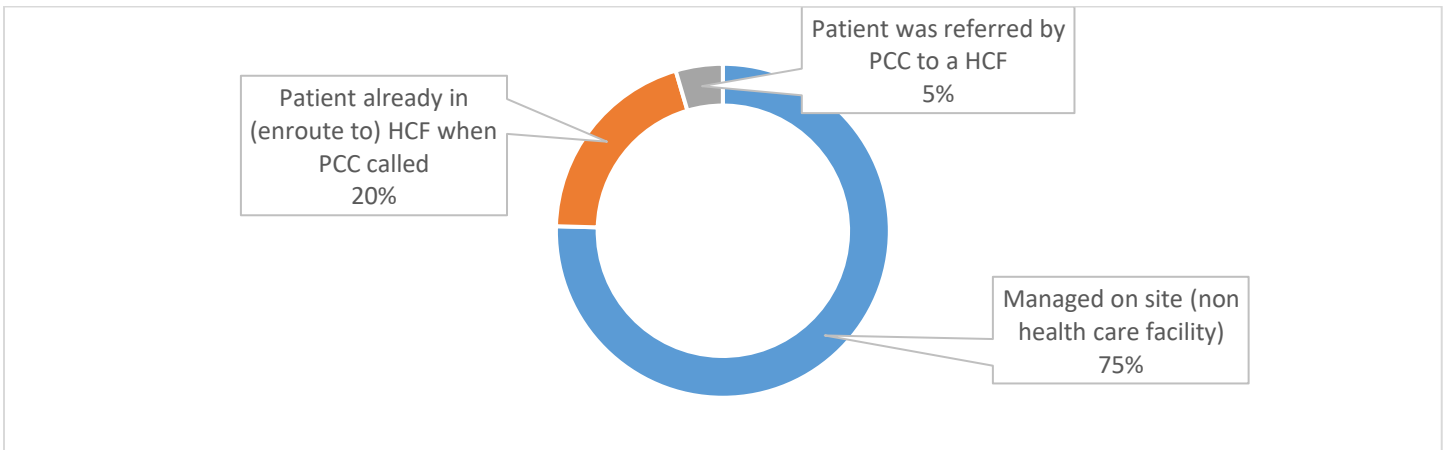


**Figure 2.** Age distribution of cases from Montgomery County, PA, reported to the Poison Control Center at CHOP in 2025



One of the greatest successes of the PCC is the team’s ability to manage cases at home rather than having individuals evaluated in a hospital (Figure 3). This translates to fewer emergency departments and doctors' visits and significant healthcare savings. The PCC often advocates that they "help people save money, save time, and provide priceless peace of mind."

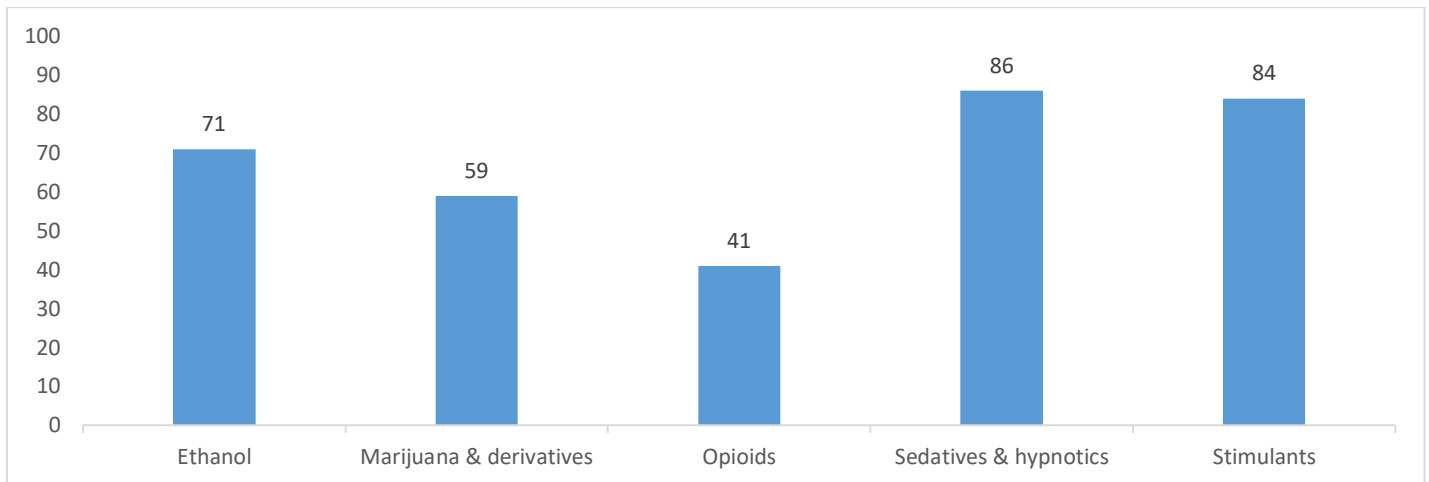
**Figure 3.** Disposition for exposure cases from Montgomery County, PA, reported to the Poison Control Center at CHOP in 2025.



### Overview of poisoning of substances involved in use disorders in Montgomery County

The current overdose epidemic impacts all communities in our region, including Montgomery County. In 2025, there were 311 cases of poisoning/overdose involving drug categories that are associated with substance use disorders. These include exposures to ethanol, opioids, sedative, stimulants, as well as marijuana and its derivative (i.e., products containing minor cannabinoids such as delta-8 THC). **Adults ages 20 to 59 years** comprised the largest cohort in these cases (35%), followed by teenagers (17%) and adults >59 years (15%). In Montgomery County, **sedatives and hypnotics** accounted for most of these exposures (Figure 4). This category of substances includes benzodiazepines (i.e., Xanax®, Ativan®, Valium®) and prescription sleep-aids. Sedatives were closely followed by stimulants, which include amphetamines and illicit drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine. Twenty-six of these cases resulted in **severe injury or death**, 12 of which were due to exposure to **opioids**. A particularly startling statistic revolves around the fact that >91% of these cases occurred at a **private residence**, as opposed to public areas such as parks or gas stations.

**Figure 4.** Cases involving drug categories commonly associated with substance use disorders reported to the Poison Control Center at CHOP from Montgomery County, PA in 2025



The data from the PCC that are specific to Montgomery County highlights the continued impact poisonings have on the community. It shows that poisonings do not necessarily discriminate based on age, and community members of all ages are impacted. This information also highlights the impact of various drugs involved in substance use disorders. Opioids continue to be a common cause of severe illness; however, sedative and hypnotic drug ingestions are on the rise. This calls for harm reduction tactics that focus on a community and family-centered approach that sheds light on poisoning and overdose prevention methods.

### *Medication errors as a common cause of poisoning*

There are many reasons why someone is poisoned, and one of the most common reasons in Montgomery County results from some sort of error involving a medication (22%). While most of these cases were managed at home, twenty resulted in medical admission to a hospital. Cases most associated with severe injury included scenarios where an individual accidentally either took or was given another individual's medication.

Of the medication errors reported from Montgomery County, the top scenarios that lead to a safety error included the following:

1. Accidentally taking a medication twice or taking two doses too closely together
2. Incorrect dose taken
3. Taking the wrong medication
4. Taking somebody else's medication

With this information, many prevention strategies can be explored to help address the issue of medication errors leading to individual harm in Montgomery County.

## Medicine Storage Tips by Age

Familiarizing yourself with these poison prevention tips can help you confidently share important safety information at health fairs and other community events. By understanding these simple but critical practices, you'll be better prepared to provide clear, concise, and accurate guidance. Take a moment to review the tips below so you can help promote a safer, healthier community.

### Age 0-5 years

Opioids are the top cause of death due to poisoning in young children. Here are steps to protect the little ones in our community.

Keeping medications stored safely is an essential step in protecting children from accidental poisonings, including opioid-related poisonings. Kids are naturally curious, so keeping all medicines—prescription, over-the-counter, and even vitamins—locked up and out of sight reduces the risk of them getting into something harmful. Always return medications to their secure storage spot right after each use, even if you need to give another dose later. It's also important to use child-resistant packaging and remind family members or visitors to store their medicines safely, too.

More tips:

- Dispose of any unused medications at home. Do not save them for a “just in case” scenario. Do this especially with opioids such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, and codeine-containing products.
- Properly dispose of “pain patches” in the trash. Do not dispose of them in trash bins visible and accessible to children. Children can place them on their skin as if they were stickers.
- Medications for opioid use disorder (i.e., buprenorphine) are dangerous for children. Keep them stored safely, locked and out of sight and reach of children.
- Take home methadone should remain locked away in accordance with clinic requirements.
- When giving a child a medication, be sure to go through the “5 rights” for safety.
  - **Right Person**-Confirm that the name on the container matches the person receiving the medicine.
  - **Right Medication**-Check that medicine listed on the label is the medication you are planning to give.
  - **Right Dose**-Verify how much should be given and use the appropriate measuring device.
  - **Right Route**-Pay attention to how the medication is to be given. If you have any questions before giving medication, ask your pharmacist.

- **Right Time**-Pay attention to how often a dose should be given, how many times a day.
- If there are any opioids in the home, make sure to know the signs of opioid poisoning and have a dose of intranasal naloxone readily available.
- Consult your pharmacist or primary care provider if you take medications while breastfeeding.
- Babies under 6 months old should not be given Ibuprofen products.
- Cough and cold medications contain multiple medications. Double check the ingredients before giving more medications such as acetaminophen.
- Double check what Ibuprofen product you have and the correct dose. The concentration is different in Infant Ibuprofen suspension versus Children’s Ibuprofen suspension.

### **Age 6-12 years**

Kids ages 6 to 12 are becoming more independent, but they still need guidance to use medications safely. Teaching them simple habits, like never taking medicine on their own, and understanding that medicine can be harmful when taken inappropriately, helps prevent mistakes. With clear rules and supervision, children can learn to make safe choices about medicine.

- Teach children to “ask” first before taking anything. By asking first, children can learn about the dangers of taking medicines or other products.
- Keep medications in original packaging to avoid any confusion.
- Supervise children when taking medications. Doing this gives children the autonomy to take their own medications under direct supervision and prevent accidental poisoning.
- Continue to practice basic precautions such as keeping medicines up, away and out of reach. Also be sure to dispose of any unnecessary medicines in the home.

### **Age 12-19 years**

Teenagers are more likely to be poisoned after taking something intentionally, whether it is for self-harm reasons or misuse of medications. Here are things to consider to keep your teen safe.

- Start with an open conversation about substance use and the dangers of misusing medicines to either experiment, feel energized, or feel better.
- Remind your teens to never accept drinks, vapes, or any substances from unknown or untrusted sources.

- Teach your teens that many products are marketed as “natural”, but there is no guarantee that they are safe. This goes for substances such as “kratom” or “7-hydroxymitragynine” (i.e., 7-OH).
- Talk to your teens about underage drinking and the dangers of mixing alcohol with other drugs or medicines. Drinking alcohol while taking opioids, sedatives, and even “natural” products such as kratom can be deadly.
- Dispose of any unused medications at home. Do not save them for a “just in case” scenario. Do this especially with opioids such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, and codeine-containing products.
- If there are any opioids in the home, make sure to know the signs of opioid poisoning and have a dose of intranasal naloxone readily available.
- Encourage label awareness to be on the lookout for unfamiliar ingredients.
- Recognize the signs when someone is at risk of suicide, including expressing feelings of hopelessness, emotional pain or distress, or showing any worrisome changes in behavior. Text or call 988 or reach out to a mental health professional.

### **Age 19-65 years**

Adults ages 19–65 often balance busy schedules, multiple responsibilities, and changing health needs, making medication safety an important part of staying well. Taking time to understand how and when to use medicines, avoid interactions, and store them properly can prevent common mistakes. With a few simple habits, adults can manage their medications confidently and protect their long-term health.

- Always double check prescription bottles and pill boxes before taking medication. Follow the “5 Rights” of medication safety.
- Set a reminder to remember to take your daily medicines. This will not only help you remember to take it, but also can help prevent accidentally taking it twice.
- Always take your pills with a full glass of water.
- Store prescription medications and chemicals safely and away from food areas to avoid confusion.
- Some products in stores and online are marketed as “natural” alternatives to modern medicine—like kratom or 7-OH. Recognize that “natural” does not guarantee safety.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while on medications or if taking any drugs. Drinking alcohol while taking opioids, sedatives, and even “natural” products such as kratom can be deadly.
- Dispose of any unused medications at home. Do not save them for a “just in case” scenario. Do this especially with opioids such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, and codeine-containing products.

- If there are any opioids in the home, always have a dose of intranasal naloxone available to protect you and your loved ones.

### **Age 65+ years**

Older adults are often on multiple medications for different health issues, which can be very confusing.

Keeping track of prescriptions, asking questions, and understanding potential interactions can help prevent common medication-related errors.

- Keep an up-to-date medication list that includes all of your prescriptions, supplements, and over-the-counter medicines. List out the names, doses, instructions, and why you take the medications. Update the list every time your primary care provider makes any changes.
- Use one pharmacy whenever possible – Filing prescriptions at a single pharmacy lets the pharmacist spot drug interactions, dosing issues or medications that may not be age appropriate.
- Take medications exactly as prescribed – Don't skip doses, double up, or stop medications without consulting with your healthcare provider. Changes in kidney and liver function with age can make dosing especially important.
- Store and organize medications safely in your home - Use a pill organizer labeled by day and time to reduce missed or double doses. Store medications in a dry and cool place (preferably not the bathroom).
- Store medications safely when traveling and when visiting families with younger children. Medications stored in purses or suitcases are still easily accessible to young children.
- Dispose of any unused medications at home. Do not save them for a "just in case" scenario. Do this especially with opioids such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, and codeine-containing products.
- If there are any opioids in the home, always have a dose of intranasal naloxone available to protect you and your loved ones.

## Sample Social Media Content:

These sample social media posts can help you promote events such as Drug Take Back Day and our take back bin at the Middleman Family Pavillion at King of Prussia. These social media posts can help promote good health behaviors on take back day and throughout the year.

### **Topic: Safe Disposal of Medication-Drug Take Back Day**

**Copy:** April 25th is National Drug Take Back Day. Take Back Day is an event for communities nationwide to properly dispose of unwanted and unneeded medications. On Saturday, April 25th from 10 AM and 2 PM bring these unwanted medications to a takeback site near you. Find the location closest to you at <https://www.dea.gov/takebackday>

**Copy:** April 25th is National Drug Take Back Day. CHOP has a drug-take bin at our Middleman Family Pavillion at King of Prussia. On Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, bring these unwanted and unneeded medicines to our take back bins. Can't make it? Every day is take-back day at CHOP; their bins are permanent and always open for use. Click here to learn more about our take back bins. <https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/poison-control-center/drug-take-back-program>

### **Topic: Drug Take Back-Year Round**

**Copy:** Disposing of unwanted and unneeded medication helps make our homes and communities safer. Check with our friends at the PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) to find a location near you! CHOP has a takeback bin at our KOPH Hospital! [Prescription Drug Take-Back Program | Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

### **Topic: Medication Errors:**

**Copy:** Medication mistakes can happen at any time, especially when you're tired and it's dark. If you take the wrong medication, call Montgomery County's Poison Center anytime at 1-800-222-1222. We are available 24/7 for fast, free, and expert advice.

### **Topic: Medication Storage**

**Copy:** Medicine should always be locked away and kept out of children's sight and reach. Use child-resistant containers, store substances in locked cabinets, and never leave them unattended.

### **Topic: Medication Safety for Seniors**

**Copy:** Want to stay on top of your medications? Follow these simple tips. Keep an up-to-date medication list. Use one pharmacy whenever possible. Take medications exactly as prescribed. Store and organize medications safely.

**Topic: Poison Center General:**

**Copy:** The Poison Control Center is here 24/7/365 to provide you with free and confidential help for any poisoning or medication questions or concerns. No question is too small. We are here for you at 1-800-222-1222

**Topic: October/November Events**

The end of October and beginning of November means National Drug Take Back Day and the end of Daylight Savings Time. Now is a great time to get rid of unwanted or unneeded medication and to check the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Now is a great time to make your home as safe as possible!

## Poison Control Center Resources

Family Centered Prevention Training Modules

<https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/poison-control-center/family-centered-prevention-training-program>

Poison Center Activity Book

<https://www.chop.edu/health-resources/poison-control-patrol-activity-and-game-book>

CHOP Naloxone Resource Page

<https://www.chop.edu/health-resources/naloxone-resources>

Safe Disposal of Medication Card

<https://www.chop.edu/sites/default/files/2024-06/safely-disposing-of-medicine.pdf>

Drug Take-Back Questions and Answers

<https://www.chop.edu/prescription-drug-take-back-bins-questions-answers>

The Five Rights of Medication Safety

[Follow the 5 “Rs” of Medication Safety \[\[CIRP\]](#)