

Safe Storage and Disposal of Oral and Topical Oncolytics

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Background

Oral and topical oncolytic medications can be very harmful if someone other than the person with cancer takes or uses them, as they are considered hazardous drugs. There are instances prior to, during, and after cancer treatment, in which patients may have one or more types of medications to take or use at home.

Once oral and topical oncolytics are dispensed to a patient, each patient, and in some instances also the family members involved in their care, will require education to know the proper ways to safely handle, store and dispose of these specific medications.

Objective

To maintain a safe working environment for all healthcare workers by maintaining proper storage and disposal of oral and topical oncolytics.

Educate healthcare workers, patients and family members who may be handling these products at home.



Methods

General storage tips:

- Consider storing oral and topical oncolytics separately from other medications. For example, keeping them on a different shelf, in a different cabinet, or drawer.
- Always store your prescription medications in a safe, cool, dry place, unless otherwise stated.
- Oral and topical oncolytics should always be stored out of the sight and reach of children and/or pets. When possible, child-proof/safety lids should be placed on all medication vials if possible.
- Store all medications in a place with good lighting for purpose of easily reading the label to ensure that the correct dose is taken each time.
- Store your medications in the package/container it came in. Medications may be in specific packaging from the manufacturer, while others will be dispensed in new store or facility packaging/vial. This will assist in organizing medications and decrease any errors. Note to always ensure the lid is tightly closed on any vial(s).
- Some oral oncolytics require that gloves be worn to safely handle the medication.
- Reminder that the information the pharmacy gives you with your new prescriptions is important for quick reference for when and how to take your medication, any special storage directions, and any potential side effects that may be experienced.

General disposal tips:

At such point an oral or topical oncolytic medication is no longer required, patients should safely dispose of it in a timely manner. A doctor, pharmacy staff, or healthcare facility are some of the resources in which one can inquire about safe disposal, or reading the informational guide that came with the prescription to learn how to safely dispose of each medication is another source.

Discussion

Participating in a local drug disposal program is important. Prescription medication disposal programs allow people to bring any unused or expired drugs to a central location to dispose of them properly and safely. Most pharmacies or prescription medication facilities will have this option. This option can be utilized by contacting the pharmacy staff about this option in the nearest community. If possible, removing the label or completely crossing out any personal information prior to taking it for disposal will help protect your identity.

References

1. Safe Medication Disposal - [Safe Medication Disposal | OncoLink](#)
2. Drug Disposal - [Drug Disposal Locator | Drug Disposal Locator Tool | Medication \(safe.pharmacy\)](#)
3. Drug Disposal: FDA's Flush List for Certain Medicines - [Drug Disposal: FDA's Flush List for Certain Medicines | FDA](#)

Disclosure

The author does not have conflicts of interest to disclose.

Conclusion

You should never throw out or flush leftover chemotherapy. Normally, you will not have extra oral chemotherapy because doctors typically prescribe it in the exact dosage and amount necessary. However, if you do, return it to a facility that ensures proper destruction and safe disposal of all medications. If you have additional questions about disposing of unused or expired oral and topical oncolytic medications, it is best to ask your doctor or pharmacy staff how to proceed. You may also call the FDA at **1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332)**

