

Psst!

Plan to stay in shape today

SPRING CLEANING



*including your
medicine cabinet*

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Spring is the ideal time to perform a major cleanup. Clearing out your medicine cabinet should be an integral part of your spring cleaning routine. Over time, a multitude of products designed to treat all kinds of ailments accumulate and occasionally you'll find more than one container of the same product.

Like the food in your refrigerator, the drug and health care products in your medicine cabinet do not last forever. For the health and safety of your entire family, you should check the expiration date of every product at least once a year and remove any that are expired.



The expiration date

All prescription medication, over-the-counter drugs, and natural and homeopathic products have “use-by” dates. Designed to ensure optimum quality, this date is determined based on product stability and degradation studies over time. The expiration date is generally expressed in month and year form. To locate this date, look for the letters “exp” (expiration) on the original packaging or on the label applied by the pharmacist. Be careful, the date may be printed on the bottom of the product or be difficult to read.

The shelf life determined by the pharmacist may vary from the expiration date indicated on the original packaging of certain products. **The date provided by the manufacturer is only valid if the container is unopened.** Your pharmacist’s label, on the other hand, indicates the exact amount of time you can keep the medication after opening the container. For example, the manufacturer’s expiry date on a bottle of eye drops may read as follows: “exp 2017/01”; however, your pharmacist’s label may instruct you to discard the product one month after opening the bottle.

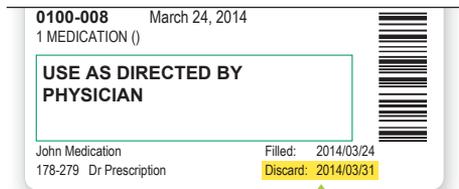
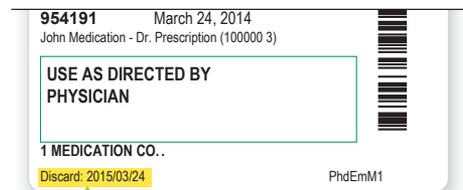
If you have any doubts, check with your pharmacist.



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For safety reasons, you should avoid taking medication after its expiration date. Though expired medication does not become ineffective overnight, it gradually loses strength, often with no apparent transformation. After the expiration date, the quality of the product may also be altered. Thus, the cream in a jar may become contaminated because the preservative inside is no longer effective. In some cases, like certain antibiotics, the medication's degradation can lead to the formation of toxic compounds. That's why medication should not be consumed past its expiration date.

Expiration date as determined by the pharmacist



To properly clean out your medicine cabinet, you should therefore get rid of:

- ▶ expired products (refer to medication shelf life table);
- ▶ products that you no longer use or that your doctor has instructed you quit taking or using;
- ▶ medication lacking an expiration date, either because it is no longer in its original packaging, or because no expiration date is indicated on the container;
- ▶ medication whose colour, form, smell or consistency has changed;
- ▶ products with a valid expiration date, but stored in inadequate conditions (e.g. exposed to heat or cold in the car's trunk, to full sunshine on a window sill, to bathroom humidity).



Protect the environment

Do not discard your medication in the trash, toilet or sink. Return it to your pharmacist, in its original packaging, if possible: it's the best way to dispose of it safely. Your medication will be packaged, and then transported by specialists to a facility where it will be incinerated. As a result, its destruction will be carried out safely and consistently. Dirty needles and syringes can be taken to the pharmacy in a safe container (available at the pharmacy).

General table specifying the shelf life of drug and other health-care products

FORM	SHELF LIFE
Tablets and capsules	<p>Whichever occurs first:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one year after opening • the manufacturer's expiration date <p>When the tablets are individually packaged, the risk of contamination or alteration through contact with ambient air is eliminated. In this case, shelf life is determined by the manufacturer's expiration date.</p>
Cream and ointment in a tube	<p>Whichever occurs first:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one year after opening • the manufacturer's expiration date
Cream and ointment in a jar	Three months after first use
Mixture and preparation	The stability of a preparation made by a pharmacist may vary significantly. For example, some reconstituted antibiotics are only stable for 7 or 14 days.
Syrup	<p>Whichever occurs first:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one year after opening • the manufacturer's expiration date
Aerosol	The manufacturer's expiration date
Product for the eyes and nose, ears	One month after opening*

* Manufacturers regularly publish new studies on the stability of their product after opening. The useful life of a product can then differ (longer or shorter) from the period mentioned in the table above. In such a case, follow your pharmacist's recommendations.

Proper storage of medication



The expiration date is an important element that allows you to ascertain the quality of your medication. However, it only applies if storage conditions are met.

Your medication should be stored:

- ▶ away from moisture (remove the cotton ball from the container, as it retains moisture);
- ▶ away from light (e.g. the sun);
- ▶ away from freezing temperatures or excessive heat;
- ▶ out of children's reach or pets (keep it in a safe place).

The bathroom is therefore not the best place to store your health-care products, and neither are the window sill, the kitchen table or the cabinet above the refrigerator or next to the stove, because light and heat are present.

The linen closet, the parents' bedroom or a kitchen cabinet located away from any heat source would be more appropriate. Placing the drug products in a sturdy and waterproof plastic container instead of a traditional cupboard is a wise choice. Be sure to always store your medication in a secure place, out of sight and reach of children. Even though you may not have children at home, you just might entertain some guests with kids.

Products intended to be kept cold should be stored in the refrigerator. Storing in the refrigerator medication designed to be kept at room temperature does not extend its useful life. In fact, medication that should be stored in the refrigerator shouldn't be kept in the freezer (and vice versa) because the temperatures are different.

When the manufacturer recommends keeping...	The product should be stored at...
In the refrigerator	+ 2 °C to + 8 °C
At room temperature	+ 15 °C to + 25 °C

Caution

OTC drugs are not harmless. Read the manufacturer's recommendations carefully and completely and observe the recommended dosage. Also, always make sure the product is suitable for you before you buy it. If you have any doubts, ask your pharmacist!



Cleaning out your medicine cabinet will also give you a chance to renew the basic products you keep on hand for minor emergencies. Of course, the contents of your medicine cabinet should be adapted to the needs of your family. The assortment of products will be different if you have children or elderly people in your home. Avoid keeping an overabundance of products; limit your selection to those you use frequently, and favour smaller formats, as they will often be enough to tide you over until you have time to consult a health professional.

The following is a list of products likely to be useful in your medicine cabinet:

Drug products

- ▶ an analgesic to relieve pain and fever;
- ▶ anti-fever medication (antipyretic)
- ▶ an antinauseant;
- ▶ an antidiarrheic;
- ▶ an antacid, to relieve heartburn;
- ▶ a syrup or saline solution to relieve nasal congestion or allergies;
- ▶ sore-throat lozenges;
- ▶ an antibiotic ointment;
- ▶ a cortisone cream.

First aid

- ▶ a digital thermometer (the Canadian Pediatric Society does not recommend the use of mercury thermometers);
- ▶ sterile pads;
- ▶ an assortment of bandages;
- ▶ scissors;
- ▶ medical adhesive tape;
- ▶ tweezers;
- ▶ 70% alcohol for disinfecting instruments;
- ▶ a chlorhexidine-based antiseptic.

Place your expired medication in the attached paper bag and bring it to your pharmacist.



Voir à l'intérieur
See inside

LE GRAND MÉNAGE

*incluant l'armoire
à pharmacie!*

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1 Rempissez

ce sac de vos
médicaments
périmés

Fill up

this bag with your
expired medication

2 Rapportez-le

à votre pharmacien

Hand it over

to your pharmacist

