Prescription drug abuse is a serious public health issue.
Opioids reduce pain for a short time, but can be dangerous if used improperly

**Safe Use**
Improper use of pain medicine is a leading cause of accidental death
- Combining opioids with alcohol or other drugs increases the risk of death
- Take medications only as prescribed.
  - Never take more than instructed
  - Never take somebody else’s medicine
  - Never give or sell your medicine to someone else
- Combining opioids with medicines used to calm anxiety can result in overdose
- Using opioids for something other than pain (anxiety, sleep, fear of pain, to feel good) can create a harmful dependence/addiction

**Safe Storage**
Unused medicines in your home are at risk for inappropriate use
- Pain relievers are a leading cause of serious poisoning of children and pets when they are left where others can get them
- Hide or lock up opioid medications to avoid access by family, friends, or houseguests
- Keep prescription medications in their original packaging so it is clear for whom the medications were prescribed and to save the directions for appropriate use

**Safe Disposal**
Place unused opioids in a disposal unit in a pharmacy or police station
Find a disposal site near you at this website: [https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch](https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch)

If no medicine take-back program is available in your area, you can flush them down the toilet or follow these simple steps to dispose of most medicines in the household trash:
- Mix medicines (do NOT crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds;
- Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag; and
- Throw the container in your household trash.
- Before throwing out your empty pill bottle or other empty medicine packaging, remember to scratch out all information on the label to make it unreadable.