

# BWC Safe Opioid Disposal

Under an initiative proposed by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) will provide injured workers with drug disposal products that destroy leftover opioid pills, liquids, and patches. Starting Nov. 1, retail pharmacies will automatically issue the products to injured workers in Ohio receiving an opioid prescription for the first time within the last 12 months.

## What is a drug disposal product?

There are two kinds currently eligible for reimbursement from BWC.

A drug disposal bag is a biodegradable plastic pouch for leftover prescription drugs in which the pills and their medicinal properties are destroyed in a three-step process:

1. Place leftover prescription in bag.
2. Add warm water.
3. Seal pouch and shake well.

A second option is [DisposeRx](#), a small powder packet whose contents destroy opioids when activated with water inside the prescription vial.

## How many opioid prescriptions does BWC cover each year?

BWC covered 164,761 opioid prescriptions in calendar year 2018, a 16% decline from 2017, for 17,707 injured workers.

BWC estimates up to 175 injured workers per month will be eligible for a disposal device.

## Who pays for the drug disposal products?

BWC will reimburse pharmacies for the bags and packets. There is no cost to the employer, injured worker or pharmacy. These devices are limited to opioid prescriptions only.

## Why do Governor Mike DeWine and BWC advocate the use of these products?

These are additional tools aimed at keeping opioids from falling into the hands of children or others who are not the intended recipient. This effort is consistent with Governor Mike DeWine's [RecoveryOhio](#) initiative.

Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health states that **nearly one-third of people ages 12 and over who used drugs for the first time began by using a prescription drug for non-medical purposes**. The illicit use of opioids has hit Ohio especially hard, **killing 39.2 people per 100,000 residents in 2017**, second only to West Virginia, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

One recent study in JAMA Pediatrics showed that providing drug disposal bags to families of patients who received postoperative opioids **increased the chance of disposing of leftover opioid medication** compared to those who did not receive a drug disposal bag.

(Lawrence AE, Carseil AJ, Leonhart KL, et al. Effect of Drug Disposal Bag Provision on Proper Disposal of Unused Opioids by Families of Pediatric Surgical Patients: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Pediatrics*. Published online August 01, 2019;173(8):e191695. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.1695)

## How much has the opioid crisis cost our state?

Opioid addiction, abuse and overdose deaths cost Ohio anywhere from **\$6.6 billion to \$8.8 billion annually**, according to a 2017 report from the C. William Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy at The Ohio State University. The crisis places a particularly heavy burden on the public sector in health care, treatment, and criminal justice costs.

