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Why You Should Stop Storing Medications in the Bathroom

BY **FRIEDA WILEY, PHARMD, RPH**

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As a pharmacist, I cringe when people tell me they keep their medications in the bathroom – it’s probably the *worst* place in your home to store medications. Just because your bathroom has a medicine cabinet doesn’t mean that it’s a good idea to store your medications there. You might as well put your medications in the garage or your car, or leave them outside.

Here are three very good reasons why you should never keep your medications in the bathroom:

1. Bathrooms are humid. Most pills, tablets, and capsules are designed to be taken with water –not only because water helps you wash the medication down, but also because it helps to



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activate the medication. Water is the first step in getting your oral medications to dissolve so the medication can work its magic in your body. Storing your medications in a humid environment makes your medications less effective by starting this process before you put the medication in your mouth.



2. High humidity can change the chemistry of your medications, often breaking them down into different substances. Ever noticed how aspirin smells like vinegar when it gets old or you leave it in the bathroom? That's because it breaks down into vinegar when exposed to humidity or it's outdated. Yuck.

3. Bathrooms get H-O-T. Unless otherwise noted, most medications should either be stored at or a few degrees below room temperature. Bathroom heat – like hot showers or the heat from your blow dryer – can weaken medications and shorten their shelf-life.


So what makes for a good location to store your medications?

- The area should be dark and receive little-to-no sunlight.
- The area should be cool. A temperature range of 68-77 degrees is best for most medications that don't need to be refrigerated or frozen.
- Temperatures should be generally stable. You don't want to store your medications in a place where they can get overheated such as a window (or a bathroom).
- The area should have low humidity.
- If children are in the home, the storage area should be out of children's reach – and sight.
- For medications that are mood-altering or addictive, the location should be secure.

Here are some examples of good places to store your medications:

- A lockbox (if children are in the house).
- The nightstand or nightstand drawer. These locations make it easier to remember to take your medications since they'll be among the first things you see in the morning and before you go to sleep.

- The kitchen pantry. Just make sure the pantry is away from the kitchen appliances that get hot.
- A bookshelf.

 *Frieda Wiley, PharmD, BCGP, RPh is a board-certified, clinical pharmacist, contract medical writer, and consultant. She has nearly 100 publications to her credit, including Arthritis Today, US News & World Report, Everyday Health, MedPage Today, and Clinical Cardiology Advisor. To read more about Frieda, visit her [website](#), or follow her on [Twitter](#).*

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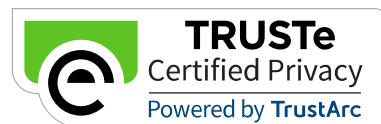
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