

# Medication - Giving Pills to Cooperative Child

## Definition

- Techniques for giving pills or capsules to a child who cooperates

## Health Information

### Wrong Technique For Giving Medicine Can Cause Vomiting

- Forcing a struggling child to take any medicine is a bad idea. It can lead to vomiting or choking.
- It will also make giving a medicine the next time harder.
- Learning good techniques for giving medicines is worth the effort.

### Over-The Counter (OTC) Medicines

- OTC medicines are those that do not need a prescription. Most OTC medicines are not needed for symptom treatment.
- Medicines that are not essential are most OTC cough and cold medicines. Fever medicines are also not required for most fevers.
- Never try to force your child to take a medicine that is not needed.
- Most often, symptoms can be helped with other types of treatment.

### Fever Medicines

- All fever and pain medicines come in liquid form.
- Fevers under 102° F (39° C) don't need to be treated. Reason: lower fevers are important for fighting the infection.
- For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Many children have trouble swallowing pills or capsules.
- Fortunately, most medicines also come in a liquid form.
- Call your child's doctor if you aren't successful with these tips for swallowing pills. Ask about a liquid or chewable form of the medicine.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Techniques for Swallowing Pills or Capsules:

- Use a thicker fluid than water. Juices or smoothies are good. It's always harder to swallow pills with water.
- Place the pill or capsule far back on the tongue. Then have your child fill the mouth with fluid. Have your child try to swallow large gulps at a time. The pill will disappear from the mouth.
- Keep the head in a neutral or slightly bent forward position. It's difficult to swallow if the head is bent backward.
- Drinking quickly through a straw can also help.

### 3. **Split or Crush Pills:**

- For easier swallowing, one approach is to split the pill into halves or quarters.
- Another approach is to convert the pill to a powder. Crush the pill between two spoons. Crushing is made easier by wetting the pill with a few drops of water. Let it soften for 5 minutes.
- Mix the crushed pill with a pancake syrup, chocolate syrup, or yogurt. You can also use any sweet food that doesn't require any chewing.
- Note: You can do this with most pills. However, don't do this with slow-release or enteric-coated pills. Check with your doctor if you are unsure what you can do.

### 4. **Capsules:**

- Slow-release capsules can be emptied. Just make sure the contents are swallowed without chewing.
- These capsules often contain medicines with a bitter taste. So, the contents need to be mixed with a sweet food. Applesauce or yogurt may work.

### 5. **Prevention Through Practice:**

- If your child is over age 8 and unable to swallow pills, he should practice. Practice this skill when he's not sick or cranky. (Note: Some children can't swallow pills until age 10.)
- Start with small pieces of candy or ice and progress to M&M's. Try to use substances that will melt quickly if they get stuck. If necessary, coat them with butter first.
- Once candy pellets are mastered, pills can often be managed as well.

## Call Your Doctor If

- Your child can't take the medicine after trying these good techniques
- You have other questions or concerns
- Your child becomes worse

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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