



# Giving Oral Medication

Giving pets medications does not have to be difficult. With the help of your veterinary support team, you can approach this task with confidence.

**Before we move on to specific techniques, let's review some medication basics:**



Do not administer any medication to your pet without your veterinarian's input. Human medications are not interchangeable with pet medications and can be highly toxic.



Ask your veterinarian to demonstrate the correct procedure for administering your medication if you are unsure.



When administering medications like tablets or capsules resist the temptation to cut or crush the medication – unless specifically recommended by your veterinarian. Many medications have a bitter flavor that will be off-putting to your pet. Additionally, some medications are coated for timed-release that will be lost if crushed.



Prepare medications and supplies beforehand. Having an assistant may be beneficial. Be ready before you get your pet.

## PILLS AND CAPSULES

### Method #1: Treats

The first strategy to administering medications is to appeal to your pet's food motivation by hiding the medication in food or treats. Commercial canned food or products like Pill Pockets are ideal for this method. Pill pockets come in a variety of flavors and have the consistency of play-dough, they are easily molded and stick to most medications. It is important to offer your pet some "undoctored" treats first. Give your pet one or two treats without any medication. Hide the medication in the third treat and have a fourth ready to go. In somewhat rapid succession, give the third treat followed by the fourth. Hopefully the pleasing taste of the fourth treat will disguise the medicated treat.



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## Method #2 Traditional Pilling

Regarding restraint; the goal of administering medication – besides your pet’s wellness – should be to do so with minimal stress. Cats, however, may require more restraint than you and a partner can safely apply. If needed, we recommend using a large bath towel to wrap the cat securely with his or her limbs against the body.

First you must open your pet’s mouth. With one hand over the muzzle, press the pet’s lips inward toward the teeth. As you do this, your pet should begin to open their mouth.

With your other hand take the pill or capsule, and gently pull downward on the lower jaw until you have good visualization of the back of the mouth.

Center the pill on the very back of the tongue, as far back as you can, then drop the pill and quickly tap it into the throat with your finger tip. Release the lower jaw; once the pet licks its nose, it has swallowed the pill. If it doesn’t immediately lick its nose, then try gently massaging the neck and throat in a downward motion.

It may be a good idea, especially for cats, to follow the medication with a syringe of 5 mls of water (about a teaspoon) to ensure the medication clears the esophagus and enters the stomach. You can ask your veterinarian if this is needed.

## Method #3: The Pilling Gun

“Pillers,” or pill gun are devices that resemble an extra-long syringe. The tip is soft and rubbery with a slit for placing the medication. At the other end is a plunger that will “pop” the pill into the back of your pet’s throat.

You must first open your pet’s mouth, again by pressing the pet’s lips inward toward the teeth until the mouth begins to open. Next, insert the piller’s rubber tip toward the back of the throat and depress the plunger. If your pet licks its nose, it has swallowed the medication. If he doesn’t lick his nose immediately, gently massage the neck and throat with a downward motion.



## LIQUID MEDICATIONS

When administering liquid medications, the aim is to place the medication in the pouch between the cheek and the molars. If your pet is a cat, this may be a good time for towel restraint and an assistant. Hold the pet’s head at a 45 degree angle. Aim the syringe or dropper at the cheek pouch and dispense the medication, slowly so the pet has a chance to swallow.

We hope this demystifies the process of administering medications to your pet. Remember with organization, the right technique, and patience you can be administering medications like a pro in no time.



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