

How to Give Your Cat a Pill

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Q. How do I give a pill to my cat?

A. If your cat is not on dietary restrictions, and your veterinarian said the medication can be given with food, the easiest way to give a pill is to hide it in a piece of food. A small amount of butter, tuna, cream cheese, liverwurst, canned cat food or semi-moist food like Pounce is often used. Canned cheese with nozzle dispensing often works too, and does not have to be refrigerated. If you are going to put the pill in the cat's food, it is best to give a small amount of the food without the pill first. This lowers your cat's suspicion index. It is best not to mix the medication in an entire meal, since if the cat does not eat the whole meal, she will not get the appropriate dose of medication.

If your cat will not take the pill in food, or cannot have food with the medication, then it is down the hatch.

1. Get the pill out of the bottle and place it where it will be handy.
 2. Bring your cat to the place you will give the pill, talking to her in a happy voice. If you do not sound worried or concerned, your cat will be less likely to feel that way as well.
 3. Sometimes, it is helpful to wrap the cat in a blanket or very large towel so just her head is sticking out. Place her back end against something so she cannot back away from you. I have found that when giving a pill to my Siamese cat, who fights against 'being pillled' literally tooth and nail, wrapping him in a large towel and then placing him between my knees as I sit on the floor gives me the most control. Other people like to place the cat more at eye level - on a table.
 4. Hold the pill between your thumb and index finger. (If you are right-handed, use your right hand.)
 5. Using your other hand, gently (but firmly) grasp your cat's head from above with your thumb on one side of the hinge of the jaw and your fingers on the other.
 6. Tilt your pet's head back over her shoulders so she is looking at the ceiling. Her lower jaw will automatically drop a bit.
- Place one of your free fingers of the hand holding the pill between the lower canine teeth (the long

TIP
Have your cat's nails trimmed prior to giving the medication. (However, do not try to do one procedure right after the other.)



front teeth) and push down.

8. Quickly place the pill as far back in your cat's mouth as possible, getting it over the 'hump' of the tongue. Do not place your hand too far in, however, or your cat may gag.

9. Close your cat's mouth, hold it closed, and lower her head to a normal position, which will make swallowing easier. Gently rub or blow on your cat's nose; this often stimulates a cat to lick her nose, and then swallow.

10. Talk softly and stroke your cat, or give another type of praise your cat will enjoy, e.g., a food treat. This will make the next time easier. And remember, the quicker you can give the medication, the easier it is on both of you.



(For better visualization, an extra large pill was used for this picture.)

• If you have to break a scored tablet, here is a simple procedure that should work for any tablet that has a somewhat rounded surface:

- A. Place the tablet on a flat hard surface.
- B. Place one thumb on each side of the score.
- C. Press down with both thumbs.



Although pictures are worth a thousand words, seeing a live demonstration is even better. If your veterinarian prescribes pills for your cat, have one of the veterinary staff show you how to give them.