How to Give Your Dog a Pill

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

A. If your dog 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, peanut butter, liverwurst, cream cheese, or canned pet food, 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 dog's food, it is best to give a small amount of the food without the pill first. This lowers your dog's suspicion index. It is best not to mix the medication in an entire meal, since if the dog does not eat the whole meal, he will not get the appropriate dose of medication.

If your dog 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. Call your dog to you in a happy voice. If you do not sound worried or concerned, your dog will be less likely to feel that way as well.
3. Take your dog to a convenient spot, and place your dog's hind end against something so he cannot back away from you. Some people have found they have better control if they place the dog on a surface up above the floor. If you do so, make sure you have assistance, so the dog will not jump or fall off the table and hurt himself. The person assisting you should hold the dog around the shoulders and chest.
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 grasp your dog's muzzle from above with your thumb on one side and your fingers on the other.

6. Squeeze behind the upper canine teeth and tilt your pet's head back over his shoulders so he is looking at the ceiling. His lower jaw will automatically drop a bit.
7. Use one of the other fingers of your right hand to lower the bottom jaw further by placing the finger between the lower canine teeth (the long front teeth) and pushing down.
8. Quickly place the pill as far back in your dog's mouth as possible, getting it over the 'hump' of the tongue. Do not

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place your hand too far in, however, or your dog may gag.

9. Close your dog's mouth, hold it closed, and lower his head to a normal position, which will make swallowing easier. Gently rubbing or blowing on your dog's nose may help stimulate him to swallow.

- 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.

- Give your dog plenty of praise, and possibly a treat. This will make next time easier. And remember, the quicker you can give the medication, the easier it is on both of you.

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

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