

Learning to Swallow Pills

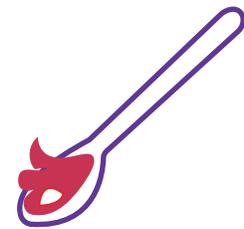


Learning to swallow pills can be hard for everyone – from children to older adults. Studies show that about **30% - 50% of children and adolescents*** have a hard time swallowing pills. Taking pills instead of liquid medicine has benefits. They are easier to carry with you and don't leave a bad taste of medicine in your mouth.

These tips can help you learn or teach your child how to swallow pills. **Please check with your pharmacist to make sure these can work for the type of medicine you take.**

Tips for Making Pill Swallowing Easier

- Put the pill in a spoonful of Jello® or pudding. This will help it slide down your (your child's) throat. Have the person practice swallowing a spoonful of the food without the medicine first. **Caregivers:** Do not hide the pill in the food as this can break trust between you and your child/teen.
- Use Hershey's Magic Shell® ice cream topping to coat the pill. Put the Magic Shell® on the pill and put it in the freezer for a minute. It should be cold and taste like chocolate.
- Check with your pharmacist to make sure your pills can be crushed. If so, place the crushed pills in cherry flavored syrup (or other flavor) or gel caps.
- Give your child choices when possible: "Would you like to stand or sit?", "What would you like it mixed with?"
- Have the child/adult keep their tongue flat when taking the pill.
- Dip the gel cap in ice water before swallowing to make it very slippery or use Pill Glide Swallowing Spray®.
- Use a special pill swallowing cup (Oralflo®; www.oralflo.com).

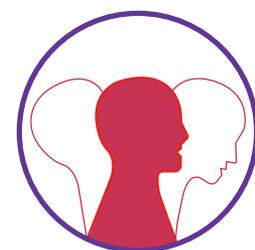


Head Positions to Make Swallowing Easier

- Try different head positions.
- Turning to the side helps the throat relax, which can make it easier for pills to slide down.



Turn head side to side



Tilt head forward and backward

Videos that May be Helpful

- Learn from another teen!
<http://copingclub.com/cody-talks-about-pill-swallowing/>

Learning to Swallow Pills

CONTINUED

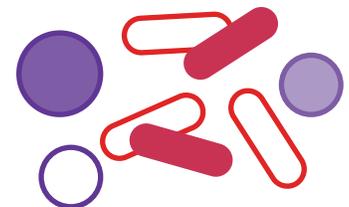
Teaching Individuals to Swallow Pills Using the Candy Method

Caregivers of children/teens: Through the process, give a lot of praise (clapping, “Great job!”). For teens, have them say “I can do this”, “I will be okay,” “I can enjoy/have fun and not worry” or “My body can handle this.” Any step forward helps increase the chance that they will swallow pills in the future. You can always go back a step if you need to.



Supplies Needed for Teaching your Child, Teen, and/or Adult How to Swallow Pills

- Small paper cups (to make sure there is not too much liquid)
- Different candies of increasing sizes (cupcake sprinkles, Nerds®, TicTacs®, mini M&M’s®, regular M&M’s®, Good ‘N Plenty®)
- Empty pill gel capsules (if possible). Ask your pharmacist.



Steps for Swallowing Pills

STEP 1: Have the person picture their throat like it’s a water slide.

- With some liquid or food, the pill will easily slide down! Remember, pills are made for swallowing without causing choking.

STEP 2: Ask the person to swallow a sip of water/juice (no carbonated or alcoholic beverages).

- Please make sure not to let your child swish the water in their mouth.

STEP 3: Starting with the smallest candy, place the candy towards the back of their tongue and let it dissolve.

STEP 4: Place the smallest candy on the back of their tongue and then ask them to take a sip of water and swallow the candy. Repeat this 2-3 times so the person feels successful before going to step 5.

- It may take many drinks/tries to get the candy to go down so do not give up after the first attempt.

STEP 5: Once a person can do steps 2-4, move on to the next candy size and repeat until you reach the size of the pill.

If your child/teen/adult reaches a candy size they cannot swallow, go back to the last size that they successfully swallowed so they can end the session with success. Each session should last about 5-10 minutes and should be fun.

Practice these steps every day until the person feels okay swallowing pills. This may take a few weeks.

If the person is still having problems swallowing pills, contact (doctor or nurse) _____ at _____ for more help.

*1. Polaha J, Dalton WT III, Lancaster BM. Parental report of medication acceptance among youth: implications for everyday practice. South Med J. 2008; 101(11):1106-1112

2. Hansen DL, Tulinius D, Hansen EH. Adolescents' struggles with swallowing tablets: barriers, strategies and learning. Pharm World Sci. 2008;30(1): 65-69