

Learning to Swallow Pills

When to start swallowing pills? Every child is unique, and the age when kids start to swallow pills will vary. Many things, from the size of the pill to anxiety or stubbornness, can make it harder for kids. Thus, it is important that children are cooperative and motivated to learn how to swallow a pill. Like any new skill, it may not happen overnight. **Practice for 5-10 minutes a day** — keep it fun and remember to praise both effort and success!

What to have on hand before practicing:

- Small Dixie® cups or equivalent
- Different size candies
 - » Cake sprinkles
 - » TicTacs®
 - » Nerds®
 - » Mike and Ike® (or candy a similar size to the actual pill)
 - » Mini M&M's®

1

Together with your child, take a few deep breaths.

Help them picture their throat like a water slide — with liquid, the pill easily slides down!

2

Ask your child to first take a sip of water/juice (no carbonated beverages) without any candy.

Encourage them not to swish the water in their mouth.

3

Starting with the smallest candy, have your child place it towards the back of their tongue.

4

Take a sip of water, tilt your head back slightly, and swallow the candy. It may take several drinks/tries to get the candy to go down, so do not give up!

5

Once consistently successful with the smallest candy, move to the next size and so on. If they reach a candy size they cannot swallow, go back one to end the session on a success.

6

Once the largest candy (similar size as the pill) is swallowed successfully, try the actual pill.

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before cutting/chopping any pills.



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Other tips and tricks:

- **Jello® or Pudding:** Put the pill in a spoonful of Jello® or pudding to help the pill slide down the throat. Practice swallowing a spoonful without the medicine first.
- **Magic Shell® or Flavored Syrup:** Coat the pill with Magic Shell® or any flavored syrup (cherry, caramel). Ask your pharmacist about other flavoring options
- **Fruit Roll-Ups® or Starburst®:** Tear off a piece of Fruit Roll-Up® or melt Starburst® candy in the microwave for 10-12 seconds and then wrap around the pill before swallowing
- **Oralflo® Cup or Medi-Straw®:** Fill the Oralflo® cup or another cup with water (or liquid of choice) and drop the pill into the cup spout or Medi-Straw® shelf. Take a drink and swallow normally as the liquid carries the pill down.
- **Pill Glide Spray or Ice Water:** If taking a gel capsule, spray it with Pill Glide or dip it in ice water first to make the coating slippery. Also try quickly drinking something after swallowing the medicine—juice or a smoothie are great options!
- **Try different head positions,** such as tilting head down slightly or sideways, to relax the throat.
- **Give children choices when possible.** “Would you like to stand or sit?” “Do you want water or juice?”