

Practical Tips for Giving Medicine to Kids

Having trouble getting your child to take their medicine?

CHILDREN CAN BE GOOD MEDICINE TAKERS IF THEY LEARN TO BE.

With a little creativity, parents & caregivers can make their children's medicine taking an easier experience for themselves as well as their children.

- Be confident, kind and firm about medicine taking.
- Let your child know when you are ready to give their medicine. Even if he/she fusses, the medicine still needs to be given as directed.

FOR ANY FURTHER ADVICE

call Healthline toll free on 0800 611 116 or
PlunketLine toll free on 0800 933 922

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

New Zealand Government



EYE DROPS

Get your child to lie with their head in your lap and their eyes closed – put the prescribed number of drops in the corner of the eye near the nose and when your child opens their eyes and blinks the eye drops will spread like magic!

TABLETS/CAPSULES

Check with your pharmacist first to make sure it's okay to crush a tablet or pull apart a capsule – some medicines may not do the job they're supposed to do or may irritate the stomach if you break up the protective coating.

Help tablets slip down in a small spoonful of apple-sauce, ice cream, or yogurt.

LIQUIDS

Use a proper medicine cup or oral syringe to measure up the dose of medicine – don't use a normal kitchen teaspoon as it's not an exact measure. You should be able to get an oral syringe from your pharmacist. It's important that children take their medicines as they're prescribed. Let your doctor know if there have been problems with your child's medicine taking.

GIVING MEDICINES TO BABIES

- You could wrap your baby gently in a towel/wrap to stop baby's arms getting in the way of your medicine giving.
- Use an oral medicine syringe and squirt a little medicine into the mouth onto the inside cheek where there are no bitter taste buds. Usually baby will swallow if the syringe is far enough back in the mouth.
- Avoid mixing medicine in your baby's bottle because if the bottle is not finished, the baby will not get the right dose. Mixing the medicine with a small amount of formula/breast milk may be ok – check with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Gently stroke their throat downward to help with swallowing if necessary.

GIVING MEDICINES TO TODDLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Let your child use a straw to sip liquid medicine up from a spoon or favourite cup. Remember to follow with water or juice through the straw to make sure that the whole dose is taken.

IF YOUR CHILD COMPLAINS ABOUT THE TASTE OF THE MEDICINE:

- Give a 'chaser' of something the child likes after taking the medicine, such as a teaspoon of chocolate sauce or a drink of apple or orange juice or breast milk/breast feed.
- Let your child suck on an ice block to numb the taste buds before taking the medicine.
- Get your child to hold his/her nose while taking the medicine in order to dull the sense of taste.

Some children may prefer to take a tablet or capsule instead of a liquid medicine – talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you think this may be an option for your child.

Try to give your child choices where possible – e.g. whether they want to have their bath before or after their medicine, or what drink they want to have after they've taken their medicine, or what sticker they'd like after taking their medicine etc.

DO praise your child for being a good medicine taker.

- Stay calm and firm – but never force your child to take their medicine. If they are persistent in refusing, try again after about half an hour.
- If a dose is missed, skip the missed dose and continue with the next dose when it is due. Do not double dose.
- Explain to your child that the medicine is to make them feel better – don't call the medicine a treat.
- Reverse psychology – tell your child it's a very special medicine and they're only allowed to have it twice/three times a day (depending on the dosing timetable) – it's amazing how often this works and makes the child eager to take it!



