

Teaching Your Child to Swallow a Pill

Ways to teach your child how to swallow pills:

1. Start by having your child get a mouth full of water (a big gulp) and look down at the floor. Then, have your child get a mouth full of water, put the capsule in and then look at the floor. The capsule will float to the back of his/her mouth. Then your child should try to swallow the gulp of water.
2. Try having your child swallow very small pieces of candy, such as MINI M&M's, cake sprinkles, tic tacs, etc...as a way to practice swallowing his/her medicine with something very small. Then have your child work his/her way up in the size until the child can swallow pills.
3. Sometimes it helps to use food. You can try a spoonful of JELLO, peanut butter, pudding, applesauce, jam, ice cream, yogurt, etc... Place the pill in the spoonful of food. Then have your child eat the spoonful.
4. Have your child take one or two swallows of milk to make his/her tongue and throat wet and slippery. Then have your child take another swallow and hold the liquid in their mouth. Place the pill in the mouth. Have your child tilt his/her head back and swallow.
5. Reduce your child's anxiety about swallowing pills by using a social story.
6. Show your child how you swallow pills!



Questions?

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Additional Resources

Websites:

- **Alberta Children's Hospital**
<http://research4kids.ucalgary.ca/pillswallowing>
 - This website features Bonnie Kaplan, PhD and her “Better than a spoonful of sugar” training videos, which follow step-by-step instructions on how to teach your child to swallow pills.
- **Steven and Alexandra Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York**
<http://www.pillswallowing.com/index.html>
 - This website features a wide range of techniques and training videos on how to teach your child how to swallow pills. The website also contains videos regarding the use of certain products such as the Oralflo™ Pill Swallowing Cup and Pill Glide™ Swallowing Spray.
- **Eduvigis Cruz-Arrieta, PhD, *Primary Psychiatry*, “Pill-swallowing Training: A Brief Pediatric Oncology Report”**
http://mbldownloads.com/0708PP_Cruz-Arrieta_CME.pdf
 - Eduvigis Cruz-Arrieta's article documents the use of behavioral techniques for teaching pill swallowing such as shaping and differential attention through case studies of her patients.

Products:

- **Oralflo™ Pill Swallowing Cup**
<https://www.oralflo.com/>
 - The Oralflo™ Pill Swallowing Cup, used by doctors in hospitals worldwide, helps alleviate pill swallowing anxiety in children ages 4 & up.
 - Available online through the Oralflo™ website or Amazon.com.
- **Pill Glide™ Swallowing Spray by FLAVORx, Inc.**
<http://flavorx.com/>
 - The Pill Glide™ is a water-based lubricating spray that creates a frictionless barrier between pills and the throat/tongue. It is available in strawberry, grape, bubblegum, peach, and orange flavors to prevent your child from tasting the bitterness of some pills.
 - Available at the pharmacy counter or online.