

# How to Give Your Cat a Pill

- Medicines in pill or capsule form are prescribed to treat a variety of conditions.
- It is important to use only medicines prescribed by a veterinarian and to treat for the full length of time prescribed.
- Do not stop treatment early, even if the problem seems to be resolved.

### The Basics

Medicines in pill or capsule form are prescribed to treat a variety of conditions, but many cats dislike taking pills. Some medicines that are usually prescribed as pills or capsules can be changed (compounded) to a liquid or a powder for easier administration. If you have trouble giving your cat pills, ask your veterinarian if compounding is possible for specific medicines.

### Follow Recommendations

It is important to use only medicines prescribed by a veterinarian and to treat for the full length of time prescribed. Do not stop treatment early, even if the problem seems to be resolved. You can ask your veterinarian to demonstrate how to give the prescribed medicine.

### Technique

Some cats will eat a pill or capsule if it is hidden in a treat or in their regular food. However, many cats will eat the treat or food and leave the pill. Also, if the pill is in food, it may be hard to tell whether your cat has taken the pill on time (or at all) if he or she eats throughout the day. Cat treats designed to hide pills are available in many stores. Ask your veterinarian if the prescribed medicine can be given with treats or food and if there are any restrictions on what your cat should eat while taking the medicine.

A more reliable method of giving a cat a pill is:

- Put one hand on top of your cat's head, holding firmly—but not too tightly—so that the tips of

your thumb and middle finger touch the corners of the mouth.

- Tilt the head back. Your cat may open his or her mouth automatically at this point.
- Hold the pill between the first finger and thumb of your other hand. Use the tip of the middle finger of this hand to gently push down on your cat's lower jaw. Be careful to place your finger on the short teeth at the very front of the mouth, not on the longer "canine" teeth at the corners.
- Drop or quickly place the pill as far back in your cat's throat as you can. Do not push the pill down.
- Hold your cat's mouth closed and stroke his or her throat (or blow on his or her nose) to encourage swallowing.
- Give your cat a reward (like a treat approved by your veterinarian) to make it a more pleasant experience.

When using this technique, be aware of your cat's mood. If he or she gets agitated and seems likely to bite, stop and try again later or contact your veterinarian.

**Contact your veterinarian if you have questions or difficulty administering any medication.**

### Restraining Your Cat

You may need help keeping your cat still while you administer medicine. If you don't have a helper handy, place your cat in your lap. Put one arm—the one you will use to hold the head—on top of your pet's body, and use your upper arm and elbow to help keep him or her still. Do not use excessive force to hold your cat still.

If your cat will not stay in your lap, you can use the same method while seated on the floor. Your cat may be more comfortable sitting upright.

If your cat struggles, talk to him or her calmly. Stop if he or she becomes extremely agitated.