

How to Give Your Dog 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 dogs 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. Some medicines for dogs come in a chewable “treat” form. If you have trouble giving your dog pills, ask your veterinarian if compounding is possible or a treat form is available 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 dogs will eat a pill or capsule if it is hidden in a soft treat or in their regular food. However, if the pill is in food, it may be hard to tell whether your dog has taken the pill on time (or at all) if he or she eats throughout the day. Dog 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 dog should eat while taking the medicine.

Another method of giving a dog a pill is:

- For a small dog, put one hand on top of your dog’s head, holding firmly—but not too

tightly—so that the tips of your thumb and middle finger touch the corners of the mouth.

- For a large dog, put your hand on top of your dog’s nose and hold the upper jaw.
- Tilt the head back.
- Hold the pill between the first finger and thumb of your other hand. Use the tips of the other fingers of this hand to push down on your dog’s lower jaw to open his or her mouth. 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.
- If you have a large dog, you may be able to fold the upper lip over his or her teeth as you open the mouth. This may discourage your dog from closing her or her mouth.
- Drop or quickly place the pill as far back in your dog’s throat as you can. Do not push the pill down.
- Hold your dog’s mouth closed and stroke his or her throat (or blow on his or her nose) to encourage swallowing.

Restraining Your Dog

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

If your dog will not stay in your lap, or is too big, you can use the same method while seated on the floor, either holding the front of your dog’s body partially against your body or on your lap. If you have a large dog, you can stand behind him or her and have him or her sit back against your legs. Sometimes it helps to back your dog into a corner.

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

Home Care

- Give your dog a reward (like a treat approved by your veterinarian) to make it a more pleasant experience.
- When using this technique, be aware of your dog'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.