

Pet Health Articles



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Giving Pills to Dogs

What is the easiest way to give my dog a pill?



The easiest way to give your dog a pill is to hide it in a special treat, such as a small amount of canned dog food or a soft dog treat that can be molded around the pill (e.g., pill pockets, pill wrap). Other tasty options include peanut butter, lunch meat, cheese, marshmallows, cooked sweet potato, or anything else your dog may find appealing. Offer pills when your dog is hungry.

To ensure your dog swallows the pill, hand-feed the medicated piece of food or treat. Some dogs may spit out the pill, so it is important to watch your pet after administering the medication. A clever pet will sometimes leave a pile of pills behind a bed or couch.

If your dog persists in spitting out the pills or if dietary restrictions prevent you from hiding the pills in food, try putting the pill directly into your dog's mouth, a process called "pilling". Make sure that you have carefully read the prescription label and understand the dosing instructions. Although medicating your dog can be intimidating, try to remain calm and confident, as your dog is likely to pick up on your stress.

Here are some tips to keep in mind before you begin:

- Place your dog in a safe and comfortable area where he can be easily handled. Have the pill ready and easily accessible.
- Never interrupt eating, drinking, grooming, or bathroom breaks to pill your dog.
- Give plenty of praise throughout the process and when you're done, to make the process easier next time.

How do I give a pill directly into my dog's mouth?

1. Lubricate the pill with a soft treat so it is easier to swallow.
2. Hold the pill between the thumb and index finger on your dominant hand.
3. With your other hand, gently grasp your dog's muzzle from above by placing your thumb behind the canine teeth on one side of the upper jaw and your fingers on the other.
4. Tilt your dog's head back, pointing his nose upwards. His jaw should drop open slightly.
5. With your pilling hand, use your little finger and ring finger to open your dog's mouth further by gently putting pressure on the lower lip and front teeth.
6. Quickly place the pill as far back over the tongue as possible, then close your dog's mouth and hold it closed while you return his head to a normal position. Your dog is more likely to swallow the pill if you place it beyond the hump of the tongue, at the back of the mouth. Try not to

place your hand or fingers too far back in the mouth, as this may stimulate a gag reflex.

7. Gently rub your dog's nose or throat or blow lightly on his nose to stimulate swallowing. Usually, a dog will lick its nose if it has swallowed the pill.

8. Immediately after pilling, give your dog some positive reinforcement (e.g., treat, petting, or playing).

What if my dog still doesn't swallow the pill?

If you continue to have difficulty, you may want to purchase a "pet piller" device, which helps deliver the pill to the back of the mouth.

If your dog is anxious or fearful of being pilled, contact your veterinarian for advice. It may be possible to have the medication compounded into a flavored liquid or treat. Veterinary pharmacies can prepare many medications into liquid or treat formulas with appealing flavors such as chicken or beef.

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