



How to medicate cats

Cats can be tricky to give medications to, especially if they are not feeling well or not eating as well as they normally do. Many medications come as pills. Some pills may be coated and others are not. The coating tends to keep the bitter taste of pills inside. Many tablets are now becoming available as flavoured chews that can be eaten like treats, making it easier for pets to take their medications. Other medications can be compounded (which is changing their form into another) into a capsule, liquid or even a transdermal gel (absorbed through the skin) for ease of administration.

Tips and tricks to getting your kitty to take their medication

- **Hiding medication in wet food:** For cats who like to eat, hiding the medication in wet food is the easiest way to medicate your cat. Be sure that they do not eat around it or if it is mixed into the food, they need to eat all their food; otherwise they may not be receiving their medications appropriately. It may be best to mix it into a small amount of food first to make sure it is all eaten before giving the rest of the meal.



- **Hiding pills in tasty treats:** there are several options available for this including Pill Pockets, Tablet Tuckers or Pill Assists. When hiding a pill in a Pill Pocket, it is best to put the pill in with one hand and close the soft chew around it with the other to prevent any of the bitter pill powder from getting on the outside of the chew and causing your kitty to spit it out. For cats that prefer the crunch of Temptations cat treats, these treats can be cut in half to reveal the soft inside and a small pill can be sandwiched into a Temptation cat treat.

- **Coating tablets or capsules:** Sometimes when giving a pill or capsule, they can become sticky when they touch saliva, so you can try coating them with a little bit of butter or oil to hide the taste as well as make them slippery and go down easier.
- **Giving a water chaser:** Especially with capsules, the medication can sometimes become stuck at the back of the cat's throat when they get sticky. Giving a small amount of water (approximately 1ml) from a syringe with no needle attached after giving the medication can help the cat swallow and take the medication down.
 - Some medications can be dissolved into water in the syringe. Please verify with us if it is ok to do with the type of medication your cat is taking.

- **Holding kitty from behind:** Some cats can become very squirmy when handled, so holding them on your lap or on a counter from behind can help give you better control as the cat cannot back up away from you. Holding your cat close to your body will leave both your hands free to put the pill in their mouth. Try to put the pill right at the back of their mouth using your finger or a cat "piller". After putting the pill in their mouth, make sure to hold their mouth closed for a few seconds or up to a minute while petting their neck gently to encourage them to swallow.



Figure: Cat "Piller"



Figure: Wrapping a kitty burrito with a towel for more secure holding.

- **Kitty Burrito:** Some cats will do even better if they are wrapped in a towel like a burrito to prevent them from squirming further. This can free up your hands to give the pill.
- **Rewarding your cat for taking medications:** Some cats will start to know when it is time for their medications. We can use this to our advantage by setting an expectation for them to get rewarded with treats! Giving them treats after they receive their medication can keep them coming back for more!

What if nothing seems to work?

If you have tried everything and none of these tips work, it may be time to discuss compounding the medication into a different form, like a liquid or a transdermal gel so that your kitty gets the important medications that they need.

Thank you for entrusting the care of your pet with Nanaimo Veterinary Hospital. Please let us know if you have any questions at 250-758-3985 or by email at nveth@shaw.ca

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