

Sierra Animal Wellness Center

Specializing in Holistic, Integrative Veterinary
Medicine



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How to Give a Cat a Pill

Anyone who has ever had to pill a cat knows just how difficult it can be. Our feline friends are far more discerning about what they eat than their doggy counterparts are. Good luck trying to hide a pill in a meatball or piece of cheese. Usually, it just ain't happenin' or if it happens once, it may never happen again. I came across these step-by-step instructions written by Dr. Arnold Plotnick for "Catster" and thought they were worth passing along. And at the end of the article are two excellent videos demonstrating this technique.



Here's a few pointers from Dr. Plotnick on how to give a cat a pill. These first ones may work one or two times but then you may need to jump to the step-by-step instructions below:

Hide the pill in tuna - Although most cats won't eat a pill hidden in food, one of the most effective ways to give a cat a pill is to camouflage it in the center of a chunk of tuna. This often works for a while, until the cat expertly learns to eat the tuna and leave a spotless pill behind.

Use pill pockets for cats - Pre-packaged soft cat treats with a hole cut in the center are

available, designed specifically for administering pills or capsules. Drop the medication into the hole, then pinch the treat closed. Some cats love the treats and will scarf them down - until that day when they bite right into the center and taste the medication. Trust me, they will forever look at these treats with disgust, and they will never eat another one again. You're back to square one.

Hide the crushed pill in food - Crushing the pill into a fine powder and mixing it into their wet food sometimes works; however, if the cat decides to only eat 60 percent of her food that day, then she's only gotten 60 percent of her medication dose. I often tell my clients to mix the powdered medication into a teaspoon of something very palatable (baby food usually works like a charm) and, once they see that the entire dose has been administered, the rest of her breakfast (or dinner) can be given. **Caution: some medications should not be crushed. Always check with Dr. Peggy first.**

This may or may not work. Cats are finicky about their food, and what is caviar to a cat on Monday may become Brussels sprouts on Tuesday. Many pills are bitter, and trying to mask a bitter powder with tuna or sardines often misses the mark. Rather than make the medicine taste better, it only makes the food taste worse.

Clients often ask if they can crush the pill into a powder, and then mix it with a little milk or water and syringe it into the cat's mouth. In theory, this sounds promising but, again, many medications are bitter, and milk or tuna juice is not enough to mask it.

Step-by-step instructions for how to give a cat a pill

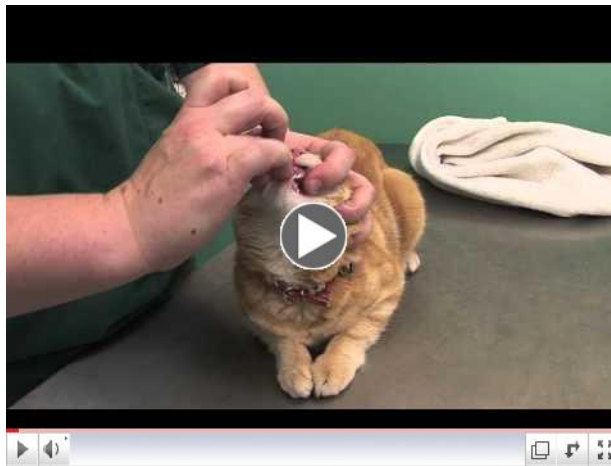
There's no way around it: At some point in your cat's life, she is likely going to need to be administered some pills. Here's the method I prefer (The description below assumes that you're right-handed. If you're left-handed, substitute the word "left" for "right"):

- Put your cat on a stable, flat surface, like a table or desk. Ideally, you'll have someone else to help hold your cat steady. If not, wrapping a towel around your cat's body often helps to steady her.
- Hold the pill between your right thumb and index finger.
- With your left hand, grasp your cat's head as if you were holding a ball - your left index, middle and ring fingers are on your cat's left cheek, and your left thumb is on your cat's right cheek.
- While gripping your cat's head, aim her nose upward. Not just up, but waaay up, so that the nose is pointing right at the ceiling. This will cause her mouth to naturally drop open a little bit.
- Use your right middle finger to push her lower jaw open a little wider, then drop

the pill (which is between your thumb and index finger) down the back of her throat. This is the most critical step. If the pill lands on your cat's tongue rather than the back of the throat, she may kick it out with her tongue, and you'll have to repeat the entire process.

- Keep grasping her head, but let go of her lower jaw as soon as you drop the pill. Gently stroke her neck, and/or blow on her nose. When she licks her lips a little, it usually indicates that she has swallowed the pill. It's a good idea to syringe a small amount of water into your cat's mouth right afterward to ensure that the pill has gone down. Some pills, if they adhere to the esophagus, can cause irritation and swallowing problems later on. Water helps alleviate that.

This video has excellent instructions on a couple of different ways to pill your cat:



This video has a similar demonstration - minus the towel wrap for a difficult cat - but I like the information on the different ways some medications can be compounded if you find it impossible to get a pill to go galloping down her gullet!



More questions on cats and medications? Give us a call at the clinic at (530) 346-6611.

Until next time, be well.

- Dr. Peggy

How to Pill a Cat - A Funny Take!

Frustrated trying to pill your cat? Here is a little pilling humor to help keep your spirits up. This has been around the block a few times and we don't know who to credit for all the laughs. Whoever you are, thanks!

(Please DO NOT try these methods at home.)



How To Pill a Cat

1. Pick up cat and cradle it in the crook of your left arm as if holding a baby. Position right forefinger and thumb on each side of cat's mouth and gently apply pressure to cheeks while holding pill in right hand. As cat opens mouth, pop pill into mouth. Allow cat to close mouth and swallow.
2. Retrieve pill from floor and cat from behind sofa. Cradle cat gently in left arm and repeat process.
3. Retrieve cat from bedroom, pick up and throw soggy pill away.
4. Take new pill from foil wrap, cradle cat in left arm, holding rear paws tightly with left hand. Force jaws open and push pill to back of mouth with right forefinger. Hold mouth shut for count of ten.
5. Retrieve pill from goldfish bowl and cat from top of wardrobe. Call spouse in from garden.
6. Kneel on floor with cat wedged firmly between knees, hold front and rear paws. Ignore low growls emitted by cat. Get spouse to hold head firmly with one hand while forcing wooden ruler into cat's mouth. Drop pill down ruler and rub cat's throat vigorously.
7. Retrieve cat from curtain rail, get another pill out of foil wrap. Make note to buy new ruler and repair curtains. Carefully sweep up shattered figurines

and vases from hearth and set on one side for gluing later.

8. Wrap cat in large towel and get spouse to lie on cat with head just visible from below armpit. Put pill in end of drinking straw, force mouth open with a pencil and blow into drinking straw.
9. Check label to make sure pill not harmful to humans, drink glass of water to take taste away. Apply Band-Aid to spouse's forearm and remove blood from carpet with cold water and soap.
10. Retrieve cat from neighbor's shed. Get another pill. Place cat in cupboard and close door just enough so that head is showing. Force mouth open with dessert spoon. Flick pill down throat with plastic band.
11. Fetch screwdriver from garage and put cupboard door back on hinges. Apply cold compress to cheek and check records for date of last tetanus shot. Throw t-shirt away and fetch new one from bedroom.
12. Call fire department to retrieve cat from tree across road. Apologize to neighbor who crashed into fence while swerving to avoid cat. Take last pill from foil wrap.
13. Tie cat's front paws to rear paws with garden twine and bind tightly to leg of dining table. Find heavy duty pruning gloves from shed. Push pill into mouth followed by a large piece of fillet steak. Hold head vertically and pour 2 pints of water down throat to wash pill down.
14. Get spouse to drive you to emergency room, drop off cat at vet clinic on the way. Sit quietly while doctor stitches fingers and forearms and removes pill from right eye. Call furniture shop on way home and order new dining table.

How To Pill a Dog

1. Wrap it in a piece of bacon and toss it.

