



Pill Swallowing

Tips from Children's Hospital at Erlanger Child Life

Learning how to swallow pills is hard for many adults and children.

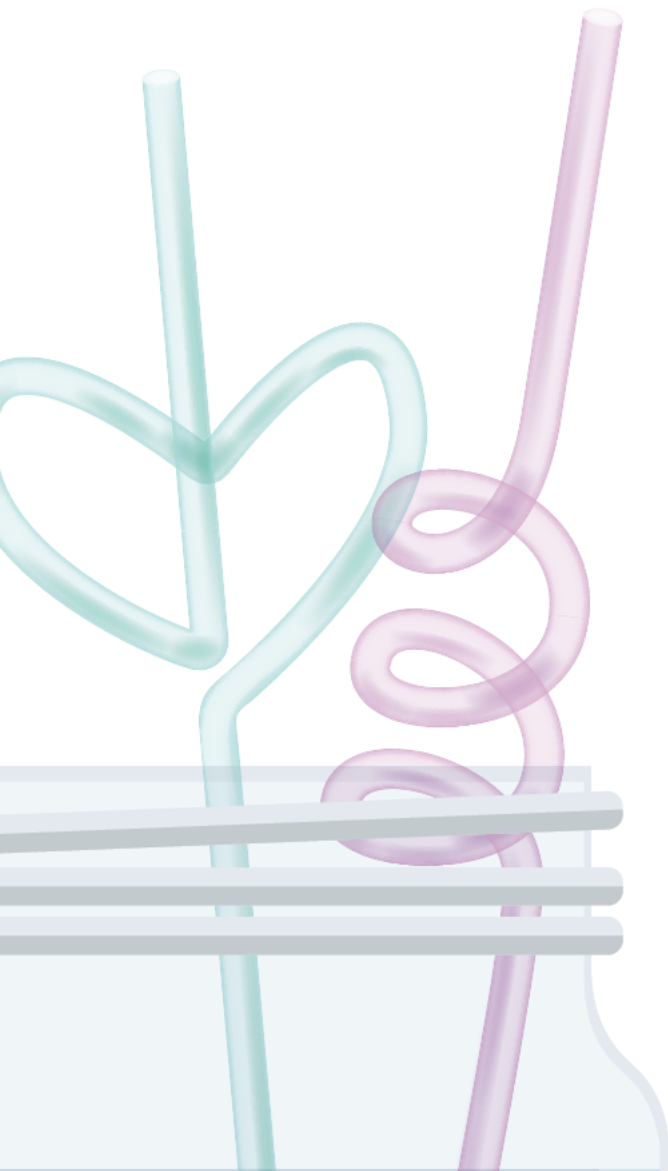
Set aside a time when you will not be disturbed and when your child is calm and receptive. Sit down with your child and explain that you are going to help him/her learn a new skill.

Things you should have on hand before learning to swallow pills:

- Small cup
- Candies of increasing sizes (cupcake sprinkles, Nerds®, mini M&M's®, regular M&M's®, Tic-Tacs®)
- Empty pill gel capsules (ask your pharmacist)



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FUN TIPS

- Insert the pill in a spoonful of Jello® or pudding so that it slides easily down your child's throat. Have your child practice swallowing spoonfuls without the medicine first.
- Dip the gel cap in ice water before swallowing to make the coating very slippery.
- Coat the pill with Magic Shell®. Pills should be placed in the freezer for 30 minutes before using them.
- Tear off a piece of Fruit Roll-Ups® or melt Starburst® candy in the microwave for 10–15 seconds wrap around the pill.
- Place pill or crushed pill in gel caps. This covering minimizes the bitter taste from the coating of the pill.

STEP 1:

Ask your child to swallow a sip of water and then praise him/her (e.g., "Sally, you did a great job swallowing the water"). Make sure your child does not swish the water.

STEP 2:

Place the smallest candy on their tongue. Then take a sip of water and swallow the candy.

STEP 3:

Once successful with steps 1–2, move on to the next candy size. This does not all have to happen at one time. It may take a few days or weeks for your child to build up his/her confidence.

Each session should last about 5–10 minutes and should be fun.

- If the pill doesn't go down with the first swallow, say, "keep drinking" and it will probably wash down with the next gulp. Let your child try as many times as needed until he/she can swallow the candy every time. If your child struggles, go back to swallowing water, praise him/her for this, and suggest that you will try again another time.
- When your child has mastered swallowing the first size, move on to the next size and so on. If your child is unsuccessful twice with the next size, let him/her return to the previous size before ending the session. This ensures that the practice session ends with success. And remember to limit each practice session to a few minutes or less as tolerated.

Note: It is important to provide a lot of praise for your child throughout the process. Any step forward helps increase the likelihood that they will swallow pills in the future. You can always go back a step if needed.

STEP 4:

Once your child successfully swallows the candy sizes (you should aim for the last candy size being similar in size to the pill), they can try an empty capsule or the actual pill. You may also try to cut or chop the pill in halves/quarters (check with pharmacist if this is okay).



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