



## How to Give Your Cat a Pill

**The following instructions assume that you are right-handed. If you're not, you'll probably want to do the mirror-image of what is described.**

1. Place your cat on a comfortable working surface such as a table, in an upright position (laying, sitting, or standing but upright--not on its side or back), and facing to your right.
2. Hold the pill between the thumb and index finger of your right hand.
3. Place your left hand on top of your cat's head in the following manner:
  - Your thumb at the right corner of your cat's mouth,
  - Your index finger at the left corner,
  - Your third finger in front of the left ear,
  - Your fourth finger behind the left ear,
  - Your fifth finger behind the right ear. If you cannot stretch your finger this far, put it behind your fourth finger on the left side of the head.
4. Lift your cat's head up and back (as though you were picking it up by the head) until the mouth line is absolutely vertical. Stroking the cat's chin with the third, fourth, and fifth finger of your right hand as you are lifting the head helps to relax your cat. You will notice that as the mouth line approaches vertical the mouth will usually open about a quarter of an inch. This allows you to easily open the mouth:
5. Put the third finger of your right hand (while still holding the pill between your thumb and index finger) on the lower jaw and push the jaw down all the way.
6. Drop the pill in the mouth so that it (hopefully) lands in the back of the mouth in the center. At this point one of two things will happen. Either:
  - a. Your cat may meow or gag in protest, in which case the tongue will drop down, and the pill will disappear. If this happens, you're done. Or,
  - b. Nothing will happen. The pill will just sit there. In this case, which is most of the time, don't just close the mouth and wait. You can wait for an eternity, and your cat probably will not swallow the pill. Instead,
7. Quickly replace the third finger of your right hand, which you used to push the jaw down, with your thumb on the jaw, which allows you to then use your index finger to push the pill down. You only need to push the pill another quarter of an inch or so, just enough to get it over the back of the tongue. You certainly don't need to push it all the way down the throat, so there's no need to gag your cat. Try to touch only the pill. Don't touch the roof of the mouth or the tongue if you can help it. If you have long fingernails, trim them before you give the pill.
8. Once the pill is over the back of the tongue, close your cat's mouth, keep the head still somewhat elevated, and watch. If your cat licks his nose with his tongue, it means it swallowed the pill. If nothing happens in a

second or two, stroke the throat with your right hand while keeping the head gently elevated with your left hand. Keep doing this until you see your cat lick his nose, signaling that it has swallowed. But if nothing happens in a few more seconds, open the mouth again and look in to see if the pill is still there. If it is, push it down a little further with your finger.

All this sounds complicated, but it works. It will, however, take practice. Don't be afraid you're going to hurt your cat. You won't. The secret to this method is getting the head straight up so that the mouth is vertical. This is virtually impossible to do without holding the head in the manner described.

Although it takes two pages to describe the method, the whole process should take you only a few seconds. You must be quick and efficient. Your cat has zero tolerance for bumbling around. You need to get it over and done with before your cat realizes what's happening.

Things that can go wrong:

1. If your cat tries to back up, place it with a wall behind it or have another person help.
2. If your cat raises its front feet to paw at you, you must be either **very** quick or have a second person restrain the feet. ☒
3. Your cat may try to thrash its head back and forth. There is no magic cure for this other than your wrist strength must be greater than the cat's neck strength.
4. If your cat is very tense and does not allow you to raise its head without resistance, gently stroke it under the chin until it relaxes. Obviously, the more your cat is used to being petted on the head, the easier it will be to give a pill.
5. If as you drop the pill into the mouth it does not land in the center, you have two options: Either try to knock it into the center with the index finger of your right hand, or let the cat spit out the pill and try again. Do not simply hold the mouth close and wait, hoping the cat will swallow the pill. It will never happen.
6. If your cat drools all over the place after giving a pill, it means that a) you did not get the pill down far enough and it was retained in the mouth too long, and b) the pill has a bad taste.
7. If your cat spits out the pill some time after you gave it, the cat never swallowed the pill but just held it in the mouth instead. Try again.
8. A few cats clench their teeth and absolutely refuse to open their mouth. This is very rare, and requires some type of pill-pushing mechanical device.

If you absolutely cannot give your cat a pill, let us know. Lots of people have trouble giving cats pills. It's easy if you have had practice, but can be a difficult technique to learn. If all else fails, many drugs can be compounded into a liquid form if one does not already exist.

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