

Oak Knoll Animal Hospital

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Giving Pills to Dogs

The easiest way to give your dog a pill is to hide the pill in food. This usually works best if you hide it in a special treat such as a small amount of canned dog food, peanut butter or cheese. To ensure that your dog swallows the pill, you should hand feed the medicated piece of food or treat rather than offering it in a large portion that the dog may not completely consume. Some dogs may spit out the pill, so it is important to watch your pet after administering the medication. *Frequently, people find a pile of pills behind a bed or couch when dealing with a particularly clever pet!* If your dog persists in spitting out the pills or if dietary restrictions prevent you from hiding the pills in an appealing treat, you will need to administer the pill directly into your dog's mouth. Make sure that you have carefully read the prescription label and understand the dosing instructions.

Follow these steps when administering a pill to your dog:

- Place your dog in a safe and comfortable area where it can be easily handled. Have the pill ready and easily accessible.
- You can lubricate the pill with a very small amount of margarine or butter so that it doesn't stick in your dog's mouth or throat and is easier to swallow.
- Hold the pill between your thumb and index finger (Use your dominant hand – for example, if you are right-handed, use your right hand).
- Gently grasp your dog's muzzle from above with your other hand, by placing your thumb behind the canine teeth on one side of the upper jaw and your fingers on the other.
- Once you have a firm but gentle grip, tilt your dog's head toward the ceiling. The lower jaw will usually drop open. With your pill-hand, use the little finger and ring finger to open the dog's mouth further by gently putting downward pressure on the lower lip and front teeth.
- Quickly place the pill as far back over the tongue as possible. 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 to avoid stimulating a gag reflex.
- Close the dog's mouth and hold it closed while you return the head to a normal position.
- *Gently rub the dog's nose or throat, or blow lightly on the dog's nose.* This should stimulate swallowing. Usually, the dog will lick its nose with its tongue if it has swallowed the pill.
- *Make sure you give plenty of praise throughout the procedure and offer a treat or extra playtime after giving the medication.* This will make the experience more positive and make it easier to give the medication the next time.



This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM

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