

## Helping Your Child Take Medicine

Children may have a hard time taking medicine because they:

- Do not like the taste.
- Are afraid of choking or throwing up.
- Had a bad experience with taking medicine.
- Want to show they have control.

### How can I make taking medicine better for my child?

#### Talk with your child

The best way to help your child understand why medicine is needed is to be honest.

- Use simple words as you talk.
- Let your child know how the medicine will make them feel better.
- Call the medicine by name and explain what it will do. Don't call it candy. It might confuse your child and **lead to an overdose**.
- Let your child know ahead of time when they will need to take their medicine.
- Be positive and stay calm. Children know when you are frustrated. This may make it harder for you to succeed.

#### Make a plan

Children do not have control over the fact that they have to take medicine. It may help to let your child have choices when taking their medicine.

- Work with your child to come up with a plan on how they will take their medicine. It's often easier for them to follow the plan when they help to make it.
- Practice the plan with your child.
- Play can be used to help your child practice giving medicine. Have your child pretend to give medicine to a favorite stuffed animal or doll.
- Use a sticker chart for your child to see their success.
- Be creative. Ask your child to help find different ways to take their medicine.
- Use distraction such as music or a favorite video when it is time to take their medicine.
- Use a timer to help your child keep on track.
- Hold younger children in your lap. Have your child hold a comfort item such as a stuffed animal or blanket.



#### Tips for taking medicine

Medicine comes in many forms. These tips may be used to help your child take different types of medicine. Remember to include your child as much as possible. This helps them feel like they have some control.

**Tips (continued)**

**Talk with your doctor or pharmacist before trying the tips listed below. Not all medicines can be crushed or cut. Some medicines should not be mixed or taken with certain foods or liquids.**

Liquid	Crushed/Powder	Pills
Ask about FlavorX®. It can be added to some medicines to make them taste better.	Use a pill crusher or crush pill between two spoons.	Try gel caps. They are easier to swallow.
Use a liquid medicine syringe rather than a medicine cup. <b>Do not squirt medicine from a medicine dropper down the back of a baby’s throat.</b> Put the dropper in the mouth, next to the cheek, and slowly give the medicine. This will help avoid choking.	If the doctor says its okay, mix with small amounts of food such as applesauce, pudding or ice cream.	Let your child practice with an empty gel cap.
Have your child eat something cold such as a popsicle or ice chips before taking medicine.	Have your child practice swallowing small amounts of suggested foods without chewing before taking medicine.	Dip the gel cap in ice water. This will make it slippery and easier to swallow.
Have your child drink juice, suck on a piece of candy, or wipe the tongue with a wet cloth to help take away the after taste.	Use syrup to dissolve crushed pill.	Use small sprinkles like those used on cookies to practice swallowing. When able to swallow those, try using mini M&M’s or tic-tacs. Candy should not be larger than the size of a pea.

**What do I do when tips and tricks do not work?**

You may have tried everything without success. Your child may still have trouble taking medicine. If your child is upset, take a break before trying to give the medicine again. This may help to calm them down.

- Taking medicine is not a choice, but is hard for some children. Be kind yet firm. Tell them that you know it is a hard thing to do and you hope it will get easier.
- You may need another adult to help you. Your child can sit on their lap and they can give a ‘hug’ from behind. By wrapping their arms around your child and holding their arms and head, you are better able to give the medicine.
- If your child will not open their mouth, press down on their chin.
- If your child tries to spit it out, hold their cheeks together.
- Help your child keep their mouth closed until the medicine is swallowed. This works best if your child is sitting upright, keeping the head as straight as possible.
- Always try to end on a positive note. Avoid failure whenever possible.

(Reference: Pediatric Oncology Resource Center, “How to Get Kids to Take...Pills!”)

**ALERT:** Call your child’s doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**