



Top Tips for Giving a Tablet to a Cat!

By Freya Britt-Lewis - Pet Health Care Writer

Most cat owners would agree that administering tablets is one of the more challenging aspects of cat ownership! It can be difficult to ensure the correct medication is given to cats as prescribed – they seem to ignore the doctor’s advice altogether! While alternative methods are available, finding the technique for pilling your cat that works for you will make treatment far less stressful for your feline family member, as well as yourself!



Here are a few simple tips for you to try with your cat.

Correct handling

Using the correct method to pill your cat can be a tricky skill, especially when cats can be crafty at deception! Below is a step-by-step method you can follow with your own cat when tablet administration is required.

Below instructions are for right-handed individuals - reverse instructions if you are left-handed.



NOTE: It is important not to continue with pill administration if your cat starts to show any sign of aggression.

1. Hold the cat in the crook of your right elbow so he cannot back away. Hold the pill in your left hand between thumb and pointy finger. Dipping the tablet in margarine or wet food will help mask the taste.
2. With your right hand over the top of the cat's head, lift the cat's chin towards the ceiling. Your cat's mouth should automatically drop open slightly in this position.
3. Use your middle finger on your left hand to open the lower jaw wider by placing it in between the two lower canines right in the centre. This reduces the risk of the sharp canine teeth biting you.
4. Place the pill as far back in the mouth over the tongue as possible.
5. Release the cat and watch him closely. Licking motions usually indicate the pill has been swallowed, however, as mentioned cats can be crafty! Always monitor for any tablets that have been spat out!

Remember to use positive reinforcement with lots of pats and treats when you have successfully pill your cat!

What not to do!

1. Do not approach from the front. Always attempt to pill with your cat facing the same way you are, holding them between your elbow and body. Otherwise, he or she will try to escape!
2. Do not try to give the pill with your cat's head in a natural position. They will be able to bite and avoid taking the tablet this way. Hold your cat's head vertically to avoid this.

Treats and pill pockets

Hiding the pill in a favourite food or treat, such as lunch meats, spreads or cheeses, can help your cat accept their medications. There are also products known as 'pill pockets', that are specially designed to mask the taste and smell of a medication.



Pill poppers



This tool is used to deliver a pill straight to the back of your cat's throat using a rubber end and a plunger. By using this, your hands will stay clear of teeth, and your chances of reaching the spot where swallowing becomes automatic for the cat increases. This will be a handy tool to have if your cat doesn't take to bribery with treats and food or doesn't allow manual pilling!



Compounding pharmacies

For some medications veterinarians can order from a compounding pharmacy in flavoured chews or flavoured liquid formulations. This is great news for cats, as they can be made with enticing flavours such as tuna, chicken or beef, that make it easier for medications to be administered. This is also a good option for cats with chronic medications, who will need to be frequently medicated.

If you know your cat is difficult to pill, you can always ask your veterinarian during the consult on the best methods of administering the medication or if there is an injectable alternative. At Turramurra Veterinary Hospital, we are more than happy to offer advice to ensure your cat is receiving the correct medications when required.