Help your child learn to swallow pills

Your doctor has recommended that your child take a medication that comes as a pill. Some children need help learning to swallow pills.

Here are some ways you can teach your child to swallow pills:

- Keep a positive attitude about swallowing pills. Use encouraging language. For example, say “I know you will be able to do this.”

- Start by having your child swallow something small, like a candy sprinkle. When your child can do this, try a slightly larger candy.

- Work up to a candy that is the same size as the pill your child will be taking.

- Some pills are the size of TicTacs™, Skittles™, Mini M&Ms™, or Mike and Ike™ candies.

- Play the Pill Swallowing Challenge Game on the back of this page. Your child can use the chart to keep track of his or her progress. Celebrate each small success along the way.

- Watch ‘The New Method of Swallowing’ with your child. This video was developed by Dr. Bonnie Kaplan at the University of Calgary. You can find it on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXFMZuNs-Fk&feature=related

If your child is still having trouble with pills after trying these steps at home, please ask your doctor for a referral to see a Child Life Specialist.

Make pill swallowing fun!

Use your child’s imagination by saying this:

Imagine your tongue is a water slide and your pill wants to go for a ride, down your tongue and into your tummy!

Get ready: Put the pill at the back of your tongue. Now the rider is on the slide!

Get set: Take some water in your mouth, but not too much. If you fill up your cheeks, the rider will float off the slide and the ride will stop.

Go: Swallow and give that rider a wet and wild ride!

Turn over to play the Pill Swallowing Challenge Game! →
The Pill Swallowing Challenge Game

What you will need:
- Water (or a non-carbonated drink like juice or Gatorade®) and a cup for you and your child
- Candies of different sizes (from ‘teeny-tiny’ to ‘goal size’ – see below)
- Stickers as rewards for each level

How to play:
- Help your child get really excited for the game!
- It is best if you do the challenge with your child. Siblings can play too!
- Start at Level 1 by having your child swallow one ‘teeny-tiny’ candy.
- Give your child a sticker to put on the chart each time he or she tries to swallow the candy. Praise even failed attempts to swallow.
- When your child can swallow a ‘teeny-tiny’ candy, congratulate his or her success! Go to the next level and have your child swallow a ‘tiny’ candy.
- Progress through each level until your child reaches the ‘goal size’. Once your child can swallow a ‘goal size’ candy, he or she is ready to swallow the medication. This process may take days to weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Try #1</th>
<th>Try #2</th>
<th>You did it!!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teeny-tiny&lt;br&gt;Example – Sprinkle</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tiny&lt;br&gt;Example – Confetti Sprinkle</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Mini&lt;br&gt;Example – Nerd™</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Little&lt;br&gt;Example – TicTac™</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Goal size&lt;br&gt;Example – Skittle™</td>
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