

Medicating Your Cat

Medicating your cat can be stressful for both the cat and the person giving the medication. These recommendations are intended to help you administer medication to your cat safely.

It is important to give your cat his medication away from other cats or other animals, so that he isn't already anxious before you begin. The presence of other animals, and sometimes even other people, may inhibit your cat from accepting food treats and make the entire process more stressful.

Medications may come in different formulations. These include: capsules, tablets, flavored liquids or flavored chewable tablets. If you are having problems with a particular formulation, ask your doctor if there is another formulation available.

1. Capsules and tablets tend to be more difficult to conceal in food than liquids are, but see what works for your cat. Some recommendations for food in which you might hide pill include: canned cat food, strained meat (human) baby food, tuna or other canned fish, plain yogurt, Pill Pockets™, cream cheese or butter. Butter is helpful because it coats the pill and eases swallowing.
 - a. Some cats will eat a ground up tablet or the contents of a capsule sprinkled in canned cat food or a food treat. However, many cats will avoid food with medication (and some medications are bitter-tasting), so it is especially important that you observe your cat's response. Put the medication in a small amount of food and make sure that your cat finishes the entire amount before giving him more food.
 - b. Other cats do better if the tablet or capsule is coated with food.
2. Liquid medications are compounded by pharmacies in various flavors. If your cat has a favorite food, a liquid in a similar flavor may be available (e.g. fish, beef or chicken). You can then mix the medication with the favorite food. With luck, your cat will not detect the medication.

Behavior Medicine

Before you start medicating your cat, develop a routine with him:

1. At the time of day when you want to give the medication, give him a wonderful treat that he will look forward to at that time each day.
2. Repeat this ritual for several days before starting the medication, making sure the quantity of the food will be sufficient to hide the quantity of medication you will be giving.
3. Once your cat knows the routine, hide the medication in the food treat.
4. Sometimes it helps to give the treat in several portions, not all of them medicated, so that your cat doesn't learn that the treat always has medication in it. Try giving a little bit of unmedicated treat first, then the medicated portion, followed by an unmedicated treat at the end to "wash it down".

The goal is to get your cat to eat the medication on his own, because that is preferable to medicating him by opening his mouth and giving the pill or liquid manually. In many cases, this can increase the anxiety, fear or aggression that we are trying to treat with the medication. It may also result in your cat hiding from you, or in your being bitten or scratched while trying to medicate your cat.

If you have tried all these suggestions and you are still having trouble, please let us know. If it is necessary to medicate your cat manually, we will be able to give you tips to make it easier.