



Extra Help for Caregivers - Learn to Swallow Pills

Many people have trouble swallowing pills. Some people have a medical reason they can't swallow a pill. Others just haven't learned yet.

If you are medically allowed to swallow pills, then you can try to learn by practicing this exercise in small steps.

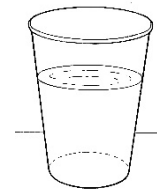


Buy a few increasing sizes of small candies. Here are some examples:

- Small candy – cupcake sprinkles, cake sugar pearls, Nerds, Tic-tacs, M&M minis
- Bigger candy - regular M & M's, Skittles, Jelly Belly, Good & Plenty, Mikes & Ike

Set up a mirror if you have one.

Set up the table with big glass of water.



1. Sit at the table. Practice first taking a mouthful of water (not so much that your cheeks are full) and swallow it.

Think of your tongue as a water slide. You are practicing sending water down the slide.

2. Set up 10 of the smallest candies in a row. Put one piece as far back on your tongue as you can. Then take a big sip of water and try to swallow the water with the pill.



Think of the candy as the rider on the water slide. Now you are practicing sending the rider down the water slide.

3. Continue to practice until you are comfortable with the small "pills". After five easy swallows, you may be ready to move to the next size.



You don't have to do all this on one day.

4. If you still feel uncertain, start each practice session with a swallow of the smallest size candy first, then progress up to the larger ones.

Some people move through all the sizes in one session. Others may move up more slowly over 2 to 6 sessions on different days.

5. If you are still having trouble swallowing the candy with a liquid, try to swallow a small candy placed on a spoon with some thicker foods like applesauce, pudding, or yogurt. Try this 5-10 times until it feels easier, and then move to larger candies.



Always check with your pharmacist about what kind of food you can use with different medicines.

6. Once you can swallow a pill-sized candy, you are ready to move to taking your medicine as a pill.

If you still need more help, ask a behavior, speech or occupational therapist for more ideas to try.

Here's a video to help you from Michigan Medicine:

How to Take a Pill: Teaching Kids How to Take Medication

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjqU9ZxUcHo>