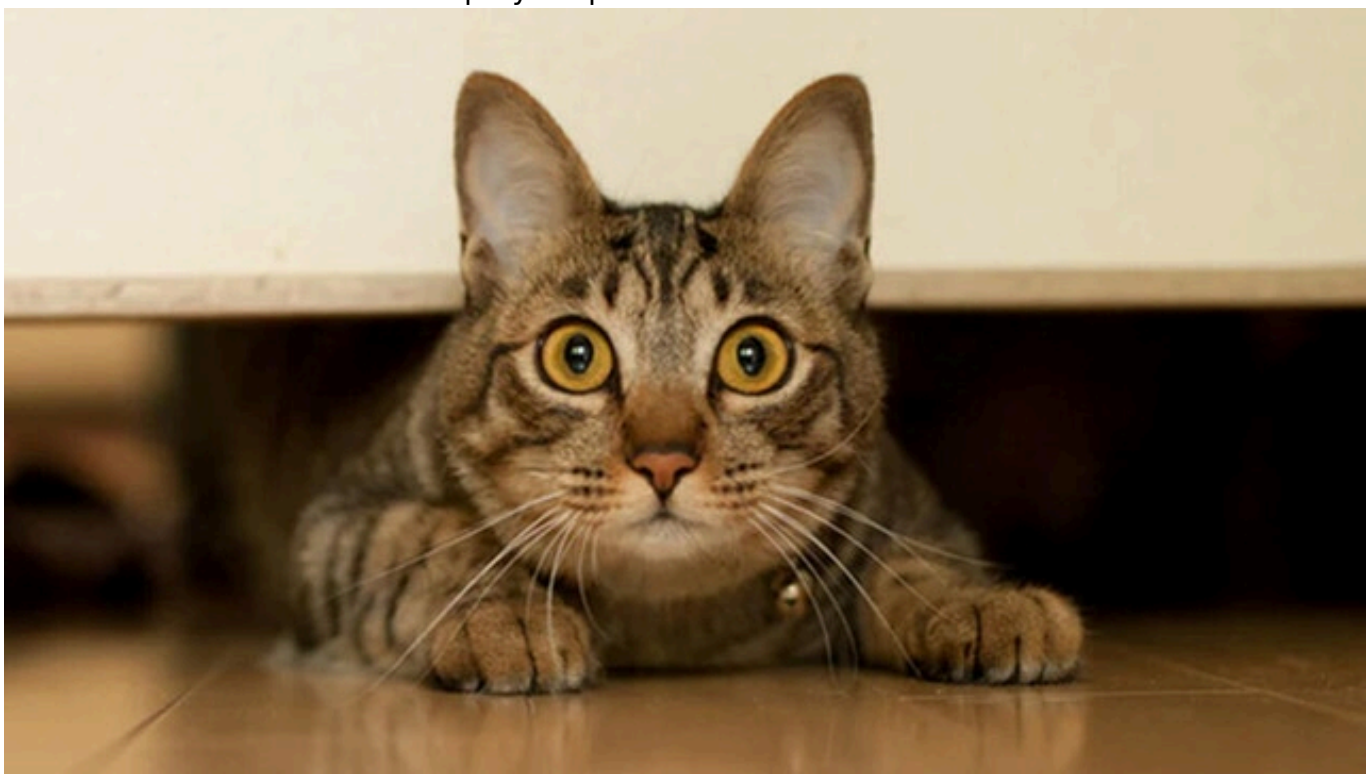


How to Give Your Cat a Pill: Step-by-Step Guide

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It’s not always easy giving your cat a pill. They’re on to you the second they smell something out of the ordinary, and then they clamp their mouth shut or run away. The good news is that, with a little creativity, it can be done!

In this guide, we’ll show you various ways to give your cat a pill: using pill pockets or soft treats, giving the pill by hand, and using a pill gun if your cat is especially stubborn. We’ll also discuss when to contact your veterinarian. (It’s OK to ask for help!)

Remember to follow your veterinarian’s instructions when you give your cat medication. If you’re unsure about dosage or how to give it, or if your cat has difficulty taking it, contact your veterinarian for guidance.

Key Takeaways

1. The easiest way to give your cat a pill is by hiding it in a pill pocket or soft treat designed to mask its taste and smell.
2. You can also give your cat a pill by hand. Tilt their head back, open their jaw, place the pill on the back of their tongue, close their mouth, and then rub their throat.
3. If you use a pill gun, keep your fingers away from your cat's teeth and place the pill quickly at the back of their throat.
4. If your cat is especially difficult, ask your veterinarian about compounded liquids, flavored formulas, or injectable options.

What to Know Before Giving Your Cat Medication

Understanding your mission before giving your cat their medication is key! Ask your veterinarian if the pill can be taken with food and how it should be taken (split, crushed, or whole). Feeling confident and calm is important for the pill-giving process, and sometimes outside support can make all the difference!

Then prepare the medication before you even find your cat to give it to them. Finally, make sure you don't interrupt your cat's eating, grooming, or time in the litter box. These two details can minimize stress for both of you.

Method 1: Hiding the Pill (The Easiest Way)

The easiest way to give your cat a pill is by hiding it. But this isn't as simple as it sounds. Your cat may not be able to see the pill, but if they can smell it, all bets are off!

So what are the best ways to maximize your chances? Let's take a look.

Common Food Hiding Methods

You can use a strong-smelling, extra yummy (cat-safe) food to mask the pill. Some ideas include:

- Wet food or a pill pocket formed around the pill
- Pungent foods like tuna or salmon
- Soft cheese or meat baby food (make sure to check they're onion and garlic-free)

The only downside to using the smell-taste trick is that cats are clever, and they're often quick to figure out how to eat the food and leave the pill behind.

Why Pill Pockets Work Better than Human Food

Most of the time, pill pockets end up working better than fish, cheese, or baby food. They're built like a pouch, perfectly sized for capsules and tablets and are formulated to mask medicinal scent and taste. Even better, most of them are less messy and lower in calories.

How to Use FELINE GREENIES™ PILL POCKETS™

Follow these 3 simple steps to try FELINE GREENIES™ PILL POCKETS™:

1. **FILL:** Hold one PILL POCKETS Treat with your thumb and forefinger; using your other hand, insert medicine. Note: To prevent transfer of the medicine's smell and taste, do not touch the PILL POCKETS Treat with the hand that held the medicine.
2. **PINCH:** Using the hand holding the PILL POCKETS Treat, squeeze the top half closed.
3. **GIVE:** The PILL POCKETS Treat is now sealed, and you can easily feed it to your cat.

Table of Contents

How to Improve Pill Acceptance with Hiding Methods

To make the pill process smoother, prepare for the big day by practicing with empty pill pockets for a few days ahead of time. You may also have better luck if you wait until your cat is hungry before giving them their pill.

And, finally, don't drop your vigilance after you think your cat has swallowed the pill. Cats are smart and can appear to swallow, but really just hold onto the pill only to happily spit it out later!

Method 2: Manual Administration (If Hiding Fails)

If hiding your cat's pill is a no-go, you'll need to place the medicine straight into their mouth. This sounds a little daunting, but you can do it if you approach your cat in a confident, calm manner and then position them properly.

Positioning Your Cat

Place your cat on a stable surface such as a countertop or table, and using the "burrito" method, wrap your cat in a towel, nice and snug. This gently restrains your cat's legs and makes it harder for them to scratch you.

If you're alone, position yourself behind or beside your cat. If you have a second person helping, ask them to hold the cat (also from behind or beside) while you administer the pill.

Step-by-Step Technique

When you're ready to give your cat their pill, follow these steps:

1. Hold the pill between the thumb and index finger of your dominant hand.
2. With your other hand, grasp the top of your cat's head from above.
3. Place your thumb on one side of their upper jaw and your fingers on the other.
4. Tilt your cat's head back until their nose points straight up to the ceiling.
5. Using your middle finger, apply gentle downward pressure on your cat's lower front teeth to open their jaw wider.
6. Quickly drop or place the pill as far back on their tongue as possible (aim for the back third of the tongue to trigger an automatic swallowing reflex).
7. Quickly close your cat's mouth and hold it gently closed.
8. Stroke their throat or blow a short puff of air on their nose to stimulate swallowing.
9. Watch for nose or lip licking as a sign that the pill went down.

Helping the Pill Go Down with Water

Cats are prone to getting pills lodged in their esophagus, so it's important to follow the steps above with a syringe or dropper of water to help the pill go down. Place the syringe or dropper at the tip of your cat's cheek pouch and squirt the water slowly.

Method 3: Using a Pill Gun (For Cats that Bite)

When to Use a Pill Gun

If your cat bites your hand when you try to give them a pill, you may want to use a pill gun. Pill guns are also helpful if you're uncomfortable putting your fingers in your cat's mouth or your cat is quick at spitting out the pill before you can close their mouth.

How to Use a Pill Gun

Here's a step-by-step guide to using a pill gun:

1. Load the pill into the soft rubber tip before restraining your cat.
2. Position your cat using the "burrito" method we mentioned above.
3. Tilt their head back the same way you would for giving them a pill by hand.
4. Insert the pill gun into your cat's mouth, aiming for the back of their tongue.
5. Press the plunger to release the pill.
6. Remove the device and close your cat's mouth immediately.
7. Stroke their throat to encourage swallowing.
8. Follow with a syringe or dropper full of water.

Tips for Pill Gun Success

If you’ve never used a pill gun before, ask your veterinarian to demonstrate how it works, and then practice loading and releasing it before you try it for real. The faster you can maneuver it, the less stress you and your cat will experience.

And one other bit of advice: be gentle with the trigger pull; don’t force it too far back.

When to Contact Your Veterinarian

Contact your veterinarian for help if:

- You have difficulty giving your cat the pill despite multiple attempts
- Your cat vomits immediately after taking the pill
- You’re unsure about whether your cat actually swallowed the pill
- You have questions about crushing, splitting, or mixing the medication
- You notice reactions to taking medication, such as drooling, lethargy, or lack of appetite

And, really, any time you need help or reassurance is a good time to get in touch with your veterinarian.

Give Your Cat Medicine the Easy Way



Explore

If you’re struggling to get a pill into your beloved cat, don’t throw your hands up in defeat! We're here with a simple alternative.

FELINE GREENIES™ PILL POCKETS™ feature built-in pouches that easily hide most capsules and tablets. These cat treats are better for your cat than human food. They're made with natural ingredients, as well as minerals and trace nutrients.

Our pill pocket treats come in a variety of yummy flavors, so you're sure to find one to please your feline friend. With FELINE GREENIES™ PILL POCKETS™, you can start looking forward to medicine time. (Yes, really!)

Contributor

Dena Bley is a registered veterinary technician with 25 years of experience and Sr. Expert Advice Team member. She began her career as a researcher at P&G before joining the Pet Health and Wellness Team at Mars 2014. With deep roots in Ohio, Dena brings over a decade of research experience and a passion for animal care, complemented by her hands-on work with a variety of animals on her family's small farm.

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Frequently Asked Questions

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1. **How do I know if my cat actually swallowed the pill?**

   Check your cat for nose or lip licking after they take a pill. This is a good sign that they actually swallowed it. And offer water or a liquid treat to wash down the pill.

   But be aware that some cats hold the pill in their cheek and then spit it out later, so search the floor or your cat's bedding to make sure that didn't happen.

2. **Can I give my cat medication when they are eating?**

   Don't interrupt your cat's meals (or grooming or litter box sessions) to give them their medication. Instead, time it for when they're hungry, right before you feed them. And if you have any questions about timing around food, ask your veterinarian.

3. **Can cats smell pills?**

   Yes! Cats have an incredibly strong sense of smell and can often detect medicated odors. If the scent is strong enough, they may flat out refuse to take it. Hiding the pills in treats that mask unpleasant smells (and taste) can help you find success.

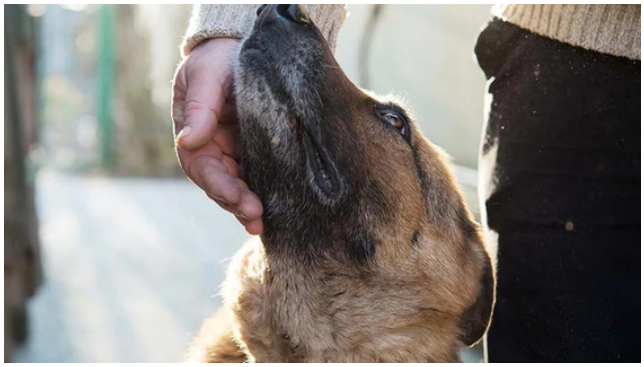
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