



For younger children and some adults, swallowing a capsule or tablet may be a challenging experience. This is when moms, dads and caregivers have to come up with creative, fun ways to train their kids to take the supplements they need. This resource is meant as a guide and source of ideas to get you started.

What is the best way to teach a child to take a pill? There are many techniques parents can try. Search the Internet; ask other parents or your healthcare provider / practitioner what they recommend. A great deal of experimentation may be required to be successful.

Most children have never had to swallow pills since many medications are available in liquid form. However, pills have their advantages: parents know the child gets the entire dose, pills hide the flavor of medicines that taste bad, pills are easier to take when traveling, and most pills do not have to be refrigerated like some liquids.

Always remember to filter these suggestions with overarching dietary restrictions such as Gluten, Casein, Soy, Seafood, Nut allergies etc. Consider your child's food texture, color, and temperature preferences as well.

Basic Food Ideas:

- Mix the supplement in a favorite pudding or yogurt
- Stir the supplement into applesauce.
- Mix with orange juice, lemonade, tomato juice or any other strongly flavored juices and concentrates.
- Stir into chocolate flavored rice milk.
- Mix with peanut or almond butter if no allergy threat.
- Stir into a smoothie.
- Mix into coconut, cocoa.
- Put into boxed fruit drinks before serving.
- Your local pharmacist or supplement manufacturer can provide solutions such as Xylitol or flavored maple, strawberry, cherry, etc. syrups to help.
- Inject liquid supplement into a warmed hot dog.
- Mix into ketchup, mustard, honey, pudding, sorbet.
- Stir into blueberry pudding – a mixture of blueberries, avocado and honey.
- Add pumpkin spice and supplement to a favorite food and blend.
- Spread, squeeze, drizzle, supplement on top of waffles and cover with syrup.
- Mix into rice crispy treats or spaghetti sauce.
- Mix into fruit based smoothies or protein drinks or a spreadable fruit.
- Mix with a bite of strawberry coconut ice-cream (substitute flavor of choice).
- For use with compounded powder from capsules, mix a “cocktail” of the capsule powder, 2 TBS of spreadable fruit (Sorrelridge or Polaner brands), 2 TBS of maple syrup and up to 1 TBS of lemon juice to help cut bitterness as needed.



Using Syringes to Administer Supplements

- Fill a syringe then slowly squirt liquid into the back of the mouth with a small syringe placed next to the cheek so it will bypass most taste buds but not trigger the gag reflex with the syringe barrel.
- Try a 5 or 10 ml size syringe. Gauge the size by the size of the child's mouth. Begin training with only the liquid (orange juice, etc.), in the syringe, and then gradually introduce the mixing of the supplement powder in phased steps until you reach the required dose. This is done by opening the capsule and pouring out portions of the powder into the syringe partially filled with the juice.
- You may want to mix the supplement and juice in a glass then fill the syringe.
- Hold the syringe pointing slightly up and begin to replace the syringe's plunger.
- Rotate the syringe and slowly advance the plunger, mixing the solution prior to giving to your child.

Process Ideas:

- Establish routines for supplement taking: place; time; give a name to it; give the time a name; etc.
- Begin "our vitamin ritual training" (use your own name...make it fun) with a pseudo dose of the supplement e.g., orange juice only. But right from the start, pretend to put the vitamins into the orange juice. Gradually introduce the supplements into the orange juice, raising the doses over time.
- Depending on your child's age, issues, etc., keep the supplements out of reach.
- Keep a calm and positive attitude, no matter what. Postpone the training and try later if need be.
- Be patient. Most will eventually learn. Some children can't accomplish pill-swallowing until their late teens!
- Show the child how to swallow pills calmly and quickly. Demonstrate taking a "pill" each time before they try. Placing a tablet or capsule back in the center of your tongue, quickly drink water, Kool-Aid, or their favorite drink through a straw. Show them your empty mouth to prove it's gone. Encourage the child to concentrate on using the straw and swallowing the liquid, the pill usually follows quickly along.
- Train in small steps with success at every stage. For example, have your child practice with a piece of small GFCFSF cake decoration. When the smallest size is swallowed without a problem, a slightly larger size may be tried. Then work up to the size of an M & M. Use substances that will melt if they get stuck or coat them first with butter. It is best to work in short sessions (5-10 minutes) several times a day over a couple of days.
- Eliminate distractions during supplement taking time. Close the door, turn the TV off, etc., allowing the child to concentrate on the job at hand.
- If the child gags or vomits, be calm and clean up the mess in a matter-of-fact non-critical way. Let the child settle down and try again when you are ready.
- Include the whole family in taking supplements. Make it fun, playful and rewarding.

Wyndgate Health Helping Children to Swallow Supplements



- Create a game of the process with rewards that are liked by your child, e.g., stickers, treats.
- You may wish to prepare these mixes out of the child's sight.
- Store your supplements according to the manufacturer's requirements.
- Using a straw reduces taste bud exposure to 'disliked' drinks.
- Freeze drinks before travel or day trips.
- Some kids like to play "Beat the Clock." Use a one or two minute time limit to swallow the 'pill'!
- Give plenty of praise, such as "Oh good! You swallowed it right down." Avoid negative comments like "Only big boys / girls take vitamins."
- Some pills are easier to swallow if they are broken into halves. Check with the pharmacist first, however, to make sure a divided pill does not lose its potency. Taste may become a factor when using divided pills and capsules. If you split a tablet, avoid creating sharp edges that may irritate the throat. A new, unused finger nail file may be used to smooth the edges.
- Have the child drink a little water before taking the pill. Tablets and capsules are harder to swallow when the youngster's mouth is dry (which often happens when they are sick).
- As long as the pill does not have to be taken on an empty stomach, have your child place a little piece of food on their tongue, next to the pill. Next have them drink some water to swallow the food and the pill usually goes down at the same time. Don't have your child tilt their head back or forward too far when swallowing as this can sometimes make it more difficult for the pill to go down.

Note: The information contained in this document is for informational purposes only. Wyndgate Health does not and cannot provide medical advice for any person which requires direct medical care. It should not be used as a substitute for medical care and the advice of your medical provider. The field of medicine is a dynamic science and should be considered accordingly. All readers must evaluate the information in this document for their own purposes, keeping in mind the individual abilities of your children. Source materials came from published by the Kirkman Group, Houston Nutraceuticals and Wyndgate Health.