

# PILL SWALLOWING PROTOCOL

With patience and consistency, most motivated, cooperative children 4 years and older can learn to swallow pills. Using progressively larger "placebos" during pressure-free and distraction-free practice sessions, children can become comfortable with the mechanics of pill swallowing.

## THE PLACEBOS

Use a series of placebos, each larger than the next. For example:

- Cake/Ice Cream sprinkles
- Cake dots
- Mini M&Ms™
- Regular M&Ms™
- Mike and Ikes™
- Lemonheads™

## PREPARATION

- Do not put time constraints on the training.
- Choose a favorite drink.
- Stay comfortable and relaxed.
- Remind your child of all the skills they have already learned.
- Consider a sticker chart or other reward system.

## TEACHING

- Sit up straight.
- Keep head straight (not tilted back).
- Take a deep breath.
- Take a drink (or two)
- Place the pill on the tongue (back of the tongue works best).
- Drink.
- Repeat x 3

## TIPS

- Spend 5-10 minutes a day for 1-2 weeks on the protocol
- Model the pill swallowing technique
- Use short, repetitive commands
- If your child wants to remove the pill or is struggling, encourage them to keep drinking. Remove the placebo if still unsuccessful.
- After 3 successful attempts with a specific placebo size, move on to the next placebo size.
- If your child is becoming frustrated, discuss what went right and return later.
- End on a positive note.



Sources:

[www.ChildrensMercy.org](http://www.ChildrensMercy.org)  
[www.KidsHealth.org](http://www.KidsHealth.org)

# MEDICATION MODIFICATION

## BE AWARE

Modifying medications (i.e. crushing, mixing, freezing, etc.) may alter the medication effectiveness. Do not alter your child's medication without discussion with, and approval from your pharmacist.

## MIXING WITH FOOD

- Crush the pill and place in a small amount of food such as applesauce, yogurt, ice cream.
- Use chocolate-flavored magic shell ice cream topping to cover the pill; Freeze for 1-2 minutes.
- Mix crushed pill or liquid with chocolate syrup.
- Place the crushed pill inside a slightly melted soft chew candy (for example, Starbursts™).
- Mix the crushed pill with powdered sugar and powdered Kool-Aid™ for a home-made pixie stick
- Mix the crushed pill or liquid medication with jelly.
- Mix the crushed pill or liquid medication in a fruit juice.
- Mix the crushed pill or liquid medication with a flavored concentrate, such as root beer.
- Ensure that your child eats/drink the entire portion.

## NUMMING TECHNIQUES

- Have your child suck on an ice cube for 1-2 minutes.
- Have your child eat a flavored popsicle
- Place the pill in the freezer for 1-2 minutes.