

**Ballston Spa Veterinary Clinic**  
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## **GIVING YOUR CAT A PILL**

The easiest way to give your cat a pill is to hide the pill in food. This usually works best if the pill is hidden in a small amount of tuna, salmon or cream cheese. To ensure that the pill is swallowed, it is best to place the pill in a small amount of food that the cat is certain to eat rather than a large portion that the cat may not complete. Some cats may spit out the pill, so it is important to monitor this activity. If your cat persists in spitting out the pills or if dietary restrictions prevent you from hiding the pills in an appealing food or treat, you will need to administer the pill directly into the cat's mouth.

Prepare a safe place to handle your cat. Have the pill ready and in a place where it will be easily accessible.

If you are administering the medication on your own, you may find it easiest to place your cat in your lap. You may need to have someone assist you in restraining your cat by wrapping it in a blanket or towel with only the head exposed.

Make sure you have carefully read the label and understand the dosing instructions.

Lubricate or "grease" the pill with a very small amount of margarine or butter so it doesn't stick in your cat's mouth or throat and will be easier to swallow. This is very helpful with the administration of capsules.



- Hold the pill between your thumb and index finger.
- Gently grasp your cat's head from above with your other hand, by placing your thumb on one side of the upper jaw and your fingers on the other. Tilt the cat's head back over its shoulder so that its nose points to the ceiling. The jaw should drop open slightly.
- With your pilling hand, use your little finger and ring finger to open the cat's mouth further by gently putting pressure on the lower lip and front teeth.
- Quickly place the pill as far back over the tongue as possible. Try to place it on the back one-third of the tongue to stimulate an automatic swallowing reflex.
- Close the cat's mouth and hold it closed while you return the head to a normal position.

- Gently rub the cat's nose or throat, or blow lightly on the nose. This should also help stimulate swallowing.
- If you have trouble with this method of opening the mouth, try placing the cat on an elevated table. Hold the cat by the scruff of the neck and lift the front paws off of the table. The mouth will drop open. Quickly place the pill as far back on the tongue as possible, as in the previous method.
- If you continue to experience difficulty, you may want to purchase a "pet piller" device or inquire if the medication comes in a tasty chewable form or can be compounded into a liquid. Most medications can be made into liquids with appealing flavors such as tuna, chicken, or salmon.

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*This client information sheet is based on material written by Ernest Ward, DVM  
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