



## Helping Your Child to Take Medicine

### How to talk to your child about medicine:

Use simple and honest language to help your child understand why they need to take medicine.

- Call the medicine what it is and explain how it will help your child.
- Prepare your child in advance for when it will be time to take medicine. This helps to make it predictable and expected, instead of a surprise.
- When you give your child medicine, keep a positive attitude. Your child can sense it when you expect a certain kind of reaction from them. If they feel you expect help from them, they are more likely to be helpful and cooperative.
- Praise your child once they have taken their medicine.

### How to help your child feel in control:

Provide concrete, realistic choices whenever possible. Children do not have control over whether they can take their medicine but they can choose *how* they take their medicine.

- Help your child make a plan about how they will take their medicine, and write the plan down. If they are involved in making the plan, it can be easier for them to stick to it.
- Practice the written plan over and over.
- Encourage your child to pretend to give medicine to a doll, a puppet or a stuffed animal. This is called "medical play," and your child can practice it right before they take their medicine and at other times.
- Make "Medicine Time" a part of the daily schedule and routine. Consistently using the same time and even place for medicine time helps your child get ready and feel prepared to take medicine.
- Help your pre-school or young school-age child to make a reward or sticker chart to help keep track of their progress.
- If they are 3 years old or above, involve your child in getting their medicine ready and taking it while you help. Always avoid leaving children alone to take their medicine.
- Be creative and work with your child to find new ways of taking medicine.

### How to make medicine easier to take:

*Before you try any of the ideas, check with your doctor or pharmacist. Some medicines may not be mixed with or taken with certain kinds of food or liquid. Other medicines may not be chewed, crushed or cut.*

#### Liquid:

Some kinds of liquid medicines are bitter and can be hard to take. Try these tips if your child has a hard time taking liquid medicine:

- Ask your pharmacist about flavoring options. Sometimes they can add a special product to help the medicine taste better.
- Try using a syringe without a needle in it. Ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider about getting a liquid medicine syringe. Use the syringe to put the medicine in the back of your child's mouth so they do not have to taste it as much.
- Your child may not taste the medicine as much if they first eat something cold. Try popsicles or ice chips.
- Mix the medicine with a strong flavor. Try a favorite powdered drink mix, chocolate syrup, maple syrup, cherry syrup or other flavored syrups. Have your child help with mixing the medicine to include them in the process.



- Take away the aftertaste of the medicine by having your child quickly drink juice afterwards. Sucking on a lollipop might also help.

### **Medicines that can be crushed:**

*Before you crush any medicine please check with your doctor or pharmacist.*

Mixing crushed pills or powdered medicine with food or juice can help mask the taste. It is important that your child is aware that you are doing this. If the technique is not successful and they feel “tricked” they may start avoiding foods. Try some of these tips:

- Buy a pill crusher at your local drug store or pharmacy, or crush pills between two spoons.
- Try mixing crushed pills with foods like applesauce, yogurt, sherbet, pudding or ice cream. Try liquids like cherry syrup, orange juice, grape juice or frozen raspberry juice concentrate.
- For the soft foods that are listed above, have your child practice swallowing small amounts without chewing before adding medicine.
- For syrups, you can dissolve crushed pills in a spoon with a little water and add syrup right into the spoon.
- For juices, you can add crushed pills to a small amount. Ensure your child drinks the full amount.

### **Pills:**

Many children can learn how to swallow pills with just a little practice. For some children, learning how to swallow pills can be hard. Your child can start trying to swallow pills if they are 5 or more years old. Here are tips to make it easier to learn how:

- Gel caps come in many sizes, and can be used to help take away the bitter taste of pills. Ask your child's healthcare provider or pharmacist for gel caps. Before filling gel caps with a pill or a crushed pill, try giving them empty or filled with sugar to practice.
- Quickly dip the gel cap in ice water before giving it to your child to swallow. This will make the coating very slippery and easier to swallow.
- Put the pill in a spoonful of Jell-O, pudding or yogurt and let it slide down your child's throat.
- Cut the pill into halves or quarters. Give your child one piece at a time to swallow.
  - o Pill cutters can be purchased from the pharmacy.
- Have your child practice swallowing pills by starting with small candies. First, have your child swallow a very small piece of candy, like one of the sprinkles that you put on ice cream. Then use candies that are just a little bigger, like M&M's Minis and Tic Tac candies. Never have your child swallow candy that is larger than a pea or a small bean.
  - o Practice tilting your head back, centre, left and right to see which way is easier to swallow water.
  - o Have your child wiggle their head back and forth when swallowing. This helps slide the pill down their esophagus.
  - o Use the waterslide analogy: put the pill at the back of your tongue (top of the slide). Put some water in your mouth but not so much that the pill falls off the slide. Swallow to send the pill down the waterslide.
  - o Scan to QR code to watch a video on how to practice pill swallowing.

