

Tips for Giving Your Dog Oral Medications

Getting dogs to take oral medications can sometimes be difficult. Here are 5 ways to help make pill-time easier. Regardless of what you do, be calm and upbeat to help your dog enjoy pill time instead of dreading it.

“The Hide”

Most dogs will very happily eat a pill or capsule that is well-hidden in a treat. The trick is to find a treat that your dog will gobble down very quickly without hesitation, but also covers the pill well. Treats that stick to the pill work especially well. Cheese, hot dogs, Pill Pockets®, peanut butter, or a thin coating of butter are all popular options. Figure out what your dog loves. If you have any questions about whether a treat is safe to give your dog, speak with your veterinarian.

“Catch-It!”

This trick requires a bit of pre-training, but it is easy to do. It works best for dogs who like to catch treats that are tossed to them. The steps are:

1. Find a treat that your dog will gobble immediately.
2. Have 5 treats ready to go, without any medication. Rapidly toss one at a time to your dog. Your dog should catch and eat each one quickly without hesitation. It’s worth doing this 2-3 different times to get your dog used to the game.
3. Once your dog is swallowing the treats quickly, set aside 5 treats but put the medication into the third treat. Do the rapid delivery of treats as you have been. Your dog should be so excited about the game that the treat with the pill is swallowed right away and followed up immediately with non-pill treats.

“Treasure Hunt”

This trick also needs a bit of pre-training. It works well for dogs who like to grab treats off the floor or who don’t like to or can’t catch treats that are tossed to them.

1. Find a treat that your dog will gobble up without hesitation.
2. Have 5 treats ready to go, without any medication. Put the treats in a row on the ground. Your dog should gobble each one up. Do this 2-3 different times to get your dog used to the game.
3. Once your dog is swallowing the treats without hesitation put the pill into the third treat in the row.

“Pills, What Pills?”

Some dogs are more accepting of a liquid mixed into their food or treats rather than a pill. Speak to your veterinarian about compounding the medication into a flavored liquid solution, or a flavored tablet. Some dog-specific medications already come in flavored tablets, so see whether that is an option for the medication that you are giving.

Another Option: “Open Up!”

Did you know that it’s possible to teach dogs to open their mouths voluntarily for you to put a pill in the back of their mouth to swallow? This can be helpful for dogs who don’t tend to gobble their treats or for ones that are fastidious with their food. Most dogs can be taught to open their mouths for pills quite successfully. Contact an experienced reward-based behavior professional such as Synergy Behavior Solutions for help on how to teach this!



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