

Tips for Pill Swallowing

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Signs of readiness to work on pill swallowing

- Child is able to follow directions
 - Your child should be able to follow multi-step directions (for example, “Put the pill on your tongue and take a drink of water.”) This ensures he has the attention and understanding required to practice one of the methods outlined below.
- Child is able to swallow foods of various textures
 - If your child has difficulty tolerating and swallowing mixed textures (for example a chicken pot pie that has both smooth and chunky textures) he may not be ready to practice pill swallowing. If your child gags when eating a variety of foods, he may not be ready to work on pill swallowing.
- Child is able to hold food in his mouth
 - If food falls out of your child’s mouth when he is eating or he drools excessively, he may lack the jaw strength and tongue control to work on pill swallowing.

Methods of pill swallowing

- Shaping
 - This is a behavioral approach for learning how to swallow a pill. With this method the child begins learning how to swallow a small candy, eventually progressing up to swallowing candy that is the size of a typical pill.
 - The key component with this method is that the child must show success with swallowing the smallest candy before progressing to the next size.
 - Once your child is able to swallow candy the size of a Tic Tac or regular M&M, he can practice swallowing an actual pill.
 - See Appendix A for the progression of pill sizes recommended.
 - Have the child take a sip of water first then demonstrate the expected behavior for the child with the smallest pill. With each success, you may progress to the next pill size.
 - If the child is not successful with swallowing a pill, reassure him that it is ok and encourage him to keep drinking and swallowing the liquid being used to practice.
 - Limit practice sessions to 10-15 minutes a day. Always begin the next practice session with the size of candy the child was successful with during the last practice session.
 - Reference the video below for an example of implementing this approach
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0-c2RJC-Cs>

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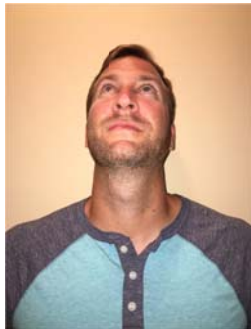
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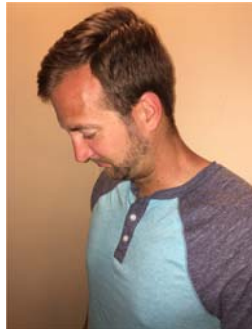
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- Head Posturing

- This method uses different head positions to try and find the position in which the child is most comfortable swallowing pills.
- Head positions include: straight on, tilted upward, tilted downward, turned to the right, and turned to the left.
- It should be noted that when the child swallows with his head turned to the right or the left, he will hear a “ngunk” sound.
- Ensure that the child is sitting/standing up straight with his shoulders back prior to practicing swallowing.
- Have the child practice swallowing water in each of the different head positions prior to practicing swallowing a pill.
- Once the child is comfortable, he can begin practicing swallowing a small candy (for example a Nerd or a Tic Tac) in each of the positions.
- The child can then identify what position is most comfortable or successful for him.
- Reference video below for examples of head positioning
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUzRGKx79k4>
- Reference the photos below for examples of the recommended head positions



Tilted up



Tilted down



Straight on



Turned to the right



Turned to the left

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- Pop Bottle
 - With this method, the child learns to swallow the pill while drinking water so that the swallow is continuous (the pill is taken down with the drink of water.)
 - Instruct the child to take the pill and place it on his tongue then place his lips tightly around a bottle of water.
 - In a continuous motion, the child will then take a drink from the bottle with a sucking motion, ensuring that his lips remain tight around the bottle. The sucking motion will cause the bottle to move inward.
 - The pill should be swallowed with the drink of water.
 - Use the analogy of sucking on the bottle like you would a straw to assist with appropriate execution of sucking motion.
 - Reference the video below for an example of the pop bottle method:
 - http://www.pillswallowing.com/video/fv_scripts/fv9.html

- Special Equipment
 - Different types of equipment are commercially available to help with the pill swallowing process.
 - Pill Glide: A throat spray intended to lubricate the throat to aid in the pill swallowing process. Pill Glide comes in a variety of different flavors.
 - <http://pillglide.com/faq.asp>
 - Oralflo Cup: A cup specifically designed to aid in the pill swallowing process. A pill can be placed in the spout of the cup and swallowed in a continuous motion with the liquid in the cup.
 - <http://oralflo.com/>



Other Tips to Consider

- Use room temperature water when swallowing pills
- Remain positive! Continuously encourage your child as he learns to swallow pills
- Visualizing successfully swallowing a pill can aid in building confidence in the pill swallowing process

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- Practice pill swallowing in a quiet, calm environment to support focus and prevent stress or overstimulation
- Practice deep breathing before working on pill swallowing to decrease stress
- Practice daily to ensure the skill is learned and mastered

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Appendix A: Pill Sizes for Shaping Method of Pill Swallowing

Candy	Length in Millimeters/Centimeters
<p>Sprinkles</p> 	<p>1-5mm</p>
<p>Nerds</p> 	<p>5mm-7mm</p>
<p>Mini M&Ms</p> 	<p>8-9mm</p>
<p>Tic Tacs</p> 	<p>9mm</p>
<p>Regular M&Ms/Skittles</p> 	<p>1.00-1.04cm</p>
<p>Jelly beans</p> 	<p>1.2cm</p>
<p>Mike & Ikes</p> 	<p>1.5-2cm</p>

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