



Helping children to take medication



Things to remember

Learning a new skill takes time, you can help your child to remain calm by remaining as calm as possible yourself

Be honest

Praise is important in learning. Your child will feel confident when you celebrate even a small success

Be consistent. All caregivers should try to use the same approach each time the child needs to take medicine

Positive self-talk is good for the child, encourage the child to acknowledge the good job they did

Reflect on how you feel, and recognise when you may be feeling frustrated as a caregiver

Remember to take a step back, have a moment, and take a deep breath

If you need it, ask someone else for help

Remember that you can also seek help from professionals if you need it, such as a nurse, a speech therapist, or a paediatric psychologist

The more positive and confident you feel as a parent/carer, the more confident your child will likely feel

Some helpful hints!

Provide just a few choices in how the child can take their medicine, for example "Would you like to take it with juice or milk?"

If possible, offer a choice about the form of medicine, such as gel capsule, liquid, tablet or syringe

If it helps, your child can suck on an ice lolly/cube before taking their medicine to help numb their taste buds

Your child can hold something that smells nice under their nose while taking the medicine, such as peppermint, as sometimes smells adds to a bad taste

Have some of your child's favourite food or drink nearby so they can quickly change the taste in their mouth

Distractions such as TV can help your child take their focus away

Dolls or puppets modelling taking medicine can be helpful

Relaxation techniques can be useful to help lessen anxiety, such as imagery, deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation – you can find lots of examples of these on YouTube, or in apps like 'Headspace' or 'Smiling Mind'

If it will help, mix pills in a small amount of something flavoured. However, **only do this if you have checked with a medical professional as not all pills can be taken this way.**

Strategies that might not be helpful

Making threats

Forcing children to do something against their will

Bribing children

Making children feel like they have failed

Punishment

Trust is important from children, especially when they are ill, so avoid hiding medicine in their food without their knowledge

Pressuring children, as this can increase their anxiety

Giving a lot more support than children need. If a child is able to take the medicine without great distress, try not to make taking medication seem like a 'huge deal'

Try to avoid allowing children to skip a dosage where possible, as this can create a pattern of future refusals

Try not to refer to medicine as sweets

Try not to end on failure