



Guide to giving your cat a tablet



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For more information please view our ‘Giving your cat a tablet’ videos at www.icatcare.org

The basics

Giving a tablet to a cat can be a daunting prospect for anyone, but with a calm and confident approach it is often much easier than you first think. The tips and tricks in this short guide will help you achieve this successfully and as easily as possible.

- **First** make sure you ask your vet (or check the manufacturer’s instructions) so that you know whether the tablet can be divided or crushed, and whether it can be administered with food
- **Second** find the simplest and easiest method to give the tablet to your cat. Several options are available as outlined in this leaflet. In addition to the leaflet, watch the videos at www.icatcare.org
- **Third** have a confident approach and keep calm at all times. If you run into difficulties or cannot manage, always contact your vet or vet nurse at your local practice – they are there to help. Make sure that you:
 - Have everything you need prepared and ready in advance
 - Have enough time and a clear plan of what you will do
 - Be gentle with your cat, keep calm, and avoid putting yourself at risk
 - If possible, always have a second person (preferably someone your cat knows) to help if you are going to administer the tablet rather than put it in with food

Try this first – keep it simple and give the tablet with food

First ensure that the tablet can be given with food – some tablets should always be given with food, and most can be given with food. However, some tablets must not be given with food – always check first. If it is safe to give with food:

- Make sure your cat is hungry! Take all food away for 12 hours to make sure your cat will want to eat.
 - Some tablets are made specifically to be palatable to cats and you can try just feeding these tablets to your cat. Remember to place the tablet at the tip of your fingers rather than in the palm of your hand. However, often cats will not eat a tablet voluntarily on its own because (even if designed to be palatable) the flavour and/or texture may be unfamiliar.
 - If the tablet is small, your cat may take it hidden in a small amount of a favourite food, such as soft cat food (or jelly from cat food) that your cat really likes, soft cheese, a small piece of soft meat or fish, or butter.
 - Make sure the tablet is completely hidden/buried in just a small amount of food that you offer to your cat.
- You can offer the food in the cat's normal bowl or from your hand/fingers - as you prefer (taking note if there are any precautions for handling the tablet).
 - If your cat eats the food, check to make sure it has also eaten the tablet and not left it behind or spat it out.
 - You can then give your cat the rest of its normal meal.
 - Some cats are clever at finding the tablet buried in food and spitting it out, or just eating the food around the tablet. If it is safe (check with your vet or the instructions that came with the tablets) you may be able to crush the tablet and mix it thoroughly in a small amount of very tasty food. This works best with palatable tablets, and with a strong-flavoured tasty treat that your cat really loves (such as some tinned fish in oil). A pill-crusher (see page 13, available from your veterinary clinic) may help to crush the tablet thoroughly.

Administering a tablet by hand – Gentle restraint:

If your cat will not take the tablet voluntarily or in with food, you will need to give the tablet by hand. Gentle, safe restraint of your cat is important, and it helps enormously to have two people – one person to give the tablet and one to hold the cat.

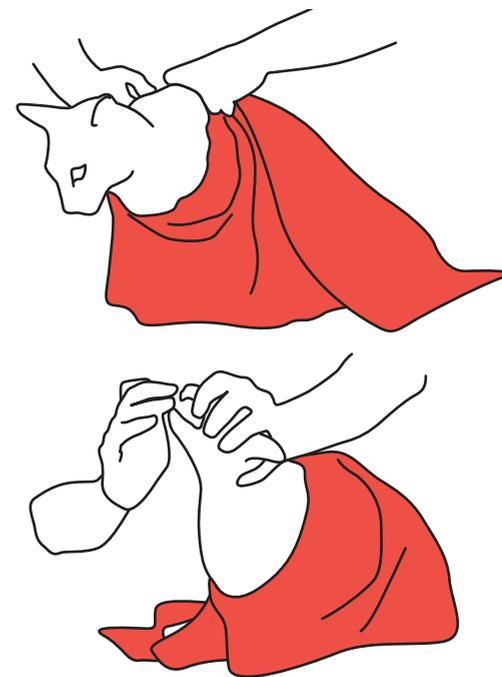
Restraining your cat with your hands

- Make sure your cat is on a stable non-slippery surface such as the floor; otherwise a firm table or work surface with a non-slip surface.
- Allow your cat to sit upright, in front of you, but facing away from you.
- Gently hold each front leg above the elbow with your hands pressed gently against the sides of your cat.
- This helps to prevent your cat running off, keeps your cat sitting upright, and controls the front legs, paws and claws.



Alternatively, restrain your cat with a towel

- This can be especially useful for very wriggly cats or if you don't have a second person to help hold your cat.
- Use a mid-sized soft towel – not too large or it will be unwieldy. Put the towel on the floor or a flat stable surface and then put the cat on top of the towel, facing away from you.
- Bring up one side of the towel and then the other, around the cat's neck so that your cat is thoroughly wrapped and cannot get its front legs out of the opening.
- Hold your cat gently but firmly in the towel.



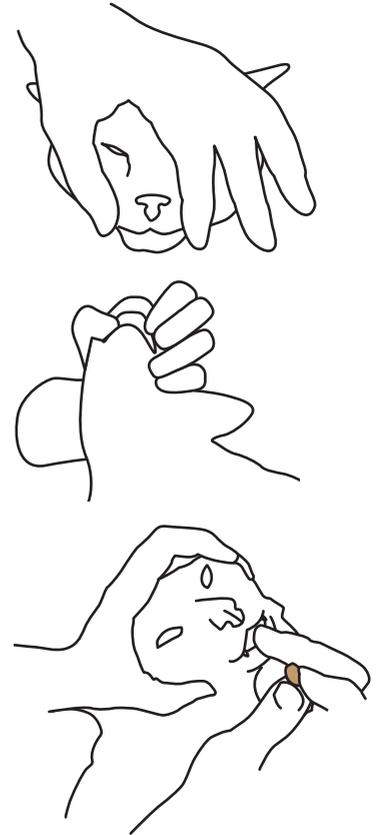
Administering a tablet by hand – giving the tablet:

Having gently restrained your cat using one of the above techniques, you can now administer the tablet. Again, this is much easier with two people - one holding the cat and one giving the tablet. Make sure you have everything ready before you restrain your cat. Try to do this quickly but calmly, so that your cat does not get upset:

- The person giving the tablet should hold the tablet between the thumb and forefinger of one hand.
- Place the *other* hand on the top of your cat's head (it is best to approach the cat from the side rather than from above – this is less threatening for your cat).
- The head should be gently but firmly held between the thumb and fingers, with your thumb and forefinger extending downwards to either side of the jaw at the corner of the mouth.
- Gently tilt the head upwards, and use the middle finger of the hand holding the tablet to pull the lower jaw down and open the mouth.
- Keep the head tilted up and quickly place or drop the tablet as far back on your cat's tongue as you can. Aim for the centre of the tongue as far back as you can see – the further back the tablet goes the harder it is for your cat to do anything other than swallow it!

- Hold the jaw closed for a few seconds and wait for your cat to swallow. Gently rubbing the throat under the chin may help. If your cat licks his lips or nose, you know he has swallowed.
- Sometimes your cat may not swallow the tablet on the first attempt and may spit it out. So long as your cat does not become distressed, you can try repeating the procedure. Always try to get the tablet as far back on the tongue as possible. Using a pill-giver (see page 10, available from your vet) can also be helpful.

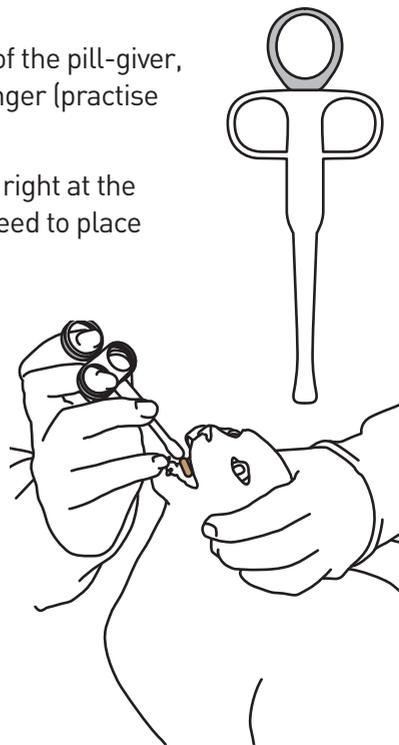
Remember, if you have problems and/or your cat gets upset, contact your local veterinary practice and talk to the vet or vet nurse about how they may be able to help.



Tools and tricks that can help

A 'pill-giver' (available from your vet)

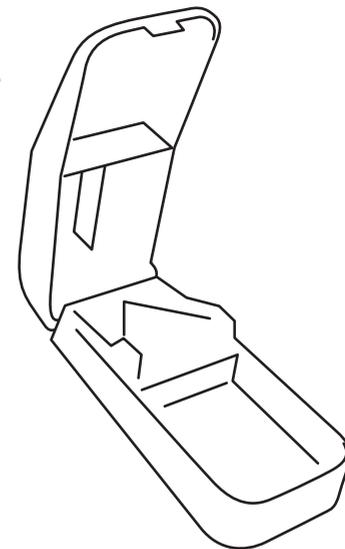
- This is a little like a syringe with a plastic plunger (and no needle!).
- The tablet will fit in the soft nozzle at the end of the pill-giver, and it is released by pushing down on the plunger (practise this before using it with your cat).
- A pill-giver can help you administer the tablet right at the back of your cat's tongue while avoiding any need to place your fingers in your cat's mouth.
- With a little practice this can be very effective and many people find it quite easy to use.
- Prepare the tablet in the pill-giver before restraining your cat, and make sure the plunger is just in contact with the tablet before use so that it is as easy as possible to release it at the back of your cat's tongue.
- The pill-giver can also be used with gelatine capsules (see page 12).



Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

A pill-splitter (available from your vet)

- This small device makes it easy to divide tablets accurately into halves or quarters. This can be useful when your cat does not need a whole tablet or when giving two smaller pieces may be easier than giving one whole tablet.
- Always check first to make sure the tablet is suitable for dividing – some tablets have a special coating, for example, and must be administered whole and not divided. If in doubt, always check with your vet.
- Place the tablet in the bottom of the "V" slot in the bottom half of the splitter. Closing the lid (which contains a sharp blade), results in the tablet being cut in half.
- Keep track of all the pieces and ensure that the correct dose is given to your cat.

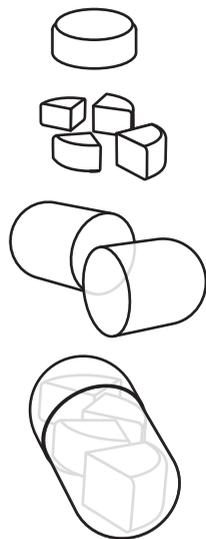


Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Tools and tricks that can help, continued

Gelatine capsules (available from your vet)

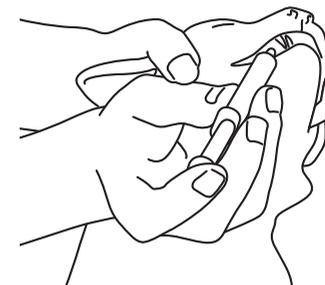
- An empty gelatine capsule (which you can get from your vet) can be used to put two or more small pieces of tablet(s) inside so that they can be administered in one go.
- This can be especially helpful if your cat needs more than one type of tablet (for example, you can put two small halves of two different tablets in one capsule), or if you break a larger tablet into smaller pieces (with a pill-splitter).
- Always check with your vet before giving more than one type of tablet at the same time – this can sometimes cause problems.
- The two halves of the gelatine capsule can be pulled apart, the pieces of tablet placed inside, and then the two halves put back together.
- The shape of the capsule means that it can be easier to administer, but lubricating it with a little smear of butter or something similar may also help.
- The capsules can be administered by hand or with a pill-giver as described on page 10.



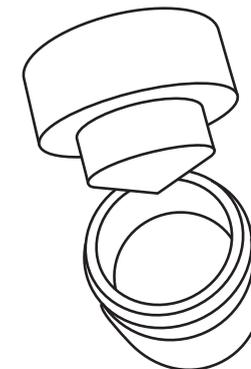
Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

A pill-crusher (available from your vet)

- Always check with your vet that it is safe to crush a tablet and give it in this way.
- Crushing a tablet to a fine powder may make it easier to mix in with a small amount of tasty food (see page 5).
- Some crushed tablets may be mixed with a little water or oil (eg, from a tin of tuna). This can then be sucked up into a syringe (without a needle) and dribbled gently into the side of your cat's mouth – always check with your vet first before attempting this, it will not be suitable for all tablets.
- Reducing a tablet to a fine powder without losing any of the dose is best achieved using a proper pill-crusher.
- Place the tablet in the base of the pill-crusher and screw down the lid to crush the tablet. Unscrew the lid and the powdered tablet can then be used.



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