

GIVING MEDICATIONS TO YOUR PET: HOW TO PUT THE TREAT INTO TREATMENTS

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At some point in your pet-owning life, you will need to give prescribed medications or treatments to your pet. That can be stressful for you and cause fear or anxiety in your pet, but we have some tips to make home care easier on both of you.

Oral Medications

- 1. Medication Incognito.** Many pets will consume a pill or capsule hidden in food or a tasty treat such as cream cheese, peanut butter with no sugar or artificial sweeteners, liver paste, hot dogs or canned cheese.
- 2. Ask your veterinarian if it is okay to crush the pill.** If it does not have a strong taste, you can mix the crushed pill with a teaspoon of canned food or tuna or clam juice.
- 3. Try the 1-2-3 (4-5) trick!** Prepare 3 to 5 "treatballs," with one containing the medication. Give 1 or 2 treatballs sans the medication. While your pet is swallowing the treat, let him see you coming with the next one. Slip in the treatball with the medication, quickly followed by a chaser treatball.
- 4. Some medications, such as antibiotics, may have a strong odor or bitter taste.** Here are a couple of ways to help make them easier for your pet to consume:
 - 🐾 Ask if the medication can be compounded into a flavored liquid or chew or made into a small tablet size.
 - 🐾 Ask if the medication can be placed in an empty gelatin capsule to minimize the odor and taste.
 - 🐾 Some medications, such as antibiotics, may have a strong odor or bitter taste and even result in nausea shortly after administration. Use caution with hiding these types of medications in special food because you risk teaching your pet to avoid the food in the future. Conditioned taste aversion is very powerful, this is especially true with cats who might refuse the food that the medication was hidden in.

Topical Treatments

These include applying routine topical heartworm, flea, and/or tick preventatives, cleaning or medicating ears, administering eye drops or eye ointment, or giving allergy or insulin injections.

- 🐾 One option for administering treatments is the distraction technique. For instance, have a helper hold a bowl of canned food above the dog's head, requiring him to look up. Once he's eating, administer eye drops. Or smear some tuna on the counter for your cat to eat while you apply a topical parasite preventive.
- 🐾 If a treatment seems painful to your pet, contact your veterinarian. Reducing and minimizing pain is integral to providing a Fear Free experience.
- 🐾 If distraction techniques aren't working, contact your Fear Free Certified veterinary professional for guidance.

Do not attempt these methods if your pet shows signs of fear such as trembling and freezing; avoidance, such as trying to get away; or aggression, such as growling, hissing (cats), snarling, snapping, or swatting. Contact your Fear Free certified veterinarian for assistance.