

How To Pill Your Cat

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Ruth has more than 15 years of experience in the veterinary industry as a companion animal veterinarian in private practice. Along with being a writer and media personality, she is also a founding member of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team.

[Dr. Ruth MacPete](#) talks about the ever-difficult task of persuading a cat to take a pill. For more from Dr. MacPete, find her on [Facebook](#) or at www.drruthpetvet.com!

Have you ever tried to “pill” your cat? If you answered yes, then you know how challenging it can be. Even the most mild-mannered kitty can turn into a spitting and hissing ball of fury. Besides being no fun, pilling your cat is also stressful for you and your cat. Fortunately there are ways to make the experience more palatable for you and your cat.

1. For some cats it may be easier to give them their medication as a liquid instead of a pill. So if your cat hates pills, don't be afraid to ask your veterinarian to prescribe the liquid version of a medication, if available.

2. If a medication only comes as a pill, try using Pill Pockets® to get your cat to take their meds. Pill Pockets® look like a tasty treat but they have a “pocket” to hide the pill. Pill Pockets® work well for most cats, especially cats that like treats.

3. For cats that are picky eaters or too smart to be fooled with Pill Pockets®, there is still hope. Most veterinary clinics and pet stores sell “pillers,” devices that help you pill your cat without having to put your finger down your kitty's throat. Although using a piller successfully requires some skill, your veterinarian can show you how to effectively use these little tools.

4. If your cat manages to defeat the piller, a compounding pharmacy may offer a solution. Compounding is the process of mixing drugs to fit the unique needs of the patient. Examples include changing the dose of a medication, making drugs that have been discontinued, removing allergenic ingredients, reformulating a medication as a liquid, and adding flavor additives to make the medication more palatable.

Many compounding companies are experienced at formulating common cat medications into tasty tuna cocktails most cats enjoy or at the very least tolerate. Talk with your veterinarian to find out if compounding is an option since not all drugs remain as effective when compounded.

5. What if your cat manages to spit out anything you put in its mouth? Thankfully, there is still hope for these cats. Many medications can be formulated for transdermal use. Transdermal means the medication is absorbed through the skin. Transdermal medications are commonly used in people to treat a number of conditions, like high blood pressure, chronic pain, heart disease, and even used for smoking cessation and birth control. Transdermal medications are easy to use and produce better results because of improved patient compliance. Who wouldn't choose putting a patch on their skin instead taking pill everyday? Unfortunately, little is known about the efficacy of many transdermal medications in cats, so they are best used as a last resort.

Whether you pill your cat by using a piller, hide it in a Pill Pocket®, or give it to them in a liquid or transdermal formulation, it doesn't really matter as long as the method you use works for your cat. If you have any problems, don't be afraid to ask your veterinarian for help. After all, a medication is only effective if you can get the patient to take their meds.

Still not sure how to do it? Watch our [video on how to give a cat a pill](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.