



## How to Swallow Tablets? (1 of 2)

Many people find tablets hard to swallow, but with practice nearly everyone will be able to do so. This leaflet gives ideas for both children and adults to help learn this skill. Children can usually start to learn this from an early age.

### Why is it important?

The benefit is that not all medicines are available in a syrup or soluble form and swallowing a tablet can be much more convenient rather than having unpleasant-tasting liquids, plus not all medicines can be crushed (your pharmacist will be able to advise on this).



Tablets, capsules, caplets, gelcaps and pills are all names for medicines which come in a form intended to be swallowed whole. We are using the word tablet to mean any of these.

### How to practice?

Small sweets can be used to practice by starting small and gradually increasing in size. For example, a Jelly Tot® can be cut up and increased in size until a Tic-Tac® is swallowed. Once larger sweets can be swallowed whole then you can move onto trying an actual tablet.

### Top tips:

- Look in a mirror and open your mouth really wide. Tablets are a lot smaller than the back of your throat & food pipe. They are also a lot smaller than chewed food that you swallow.
- Always have a drink to ensure that the mouth is moist before trying to swallow a tablet, plus it can help to wash it down & remove the taste. (You can try a fizzy or flavoured drink).
- Never use hot drinks as this may make the tablet dissolve before it is swallowed.
- Place the tablet as far back on the tongue as possible and position it lengthways along the tongue. Initially the aim is to not gag, with time and practice it can then be swallowed.

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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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### Different techniques:

- **With food** → put the tablet on a spoon with a small amount of yoghurt, mashed potato, or fruit puree. Swallow the spoonful in one go. Or try chewing a piece of bread and just before swallowing, pop the tablet in to swallow both together. (Some medicines have to be taken on an empty stomach and will be labelled accordingly).
- **Tilt chin** → to chest (tipping your head back makes swallowing more difficult).
- **'Big gulp'** → place tablet in mouth, take as much drink as you can hold in your mouth, and then swirl it around before then gulping it down.
- **Breath hold** → take a deep breath & hold it until after placing the tablet on the tongue. Then swallow with a drink. The breath hold may reduce the gag reflex.
- **Bottle** → place tablet on tongue, then close lips tightly around a bottle top & take a drink, whilst keeping a seal until swallowed.
- **Straw** → using a straw to drink water may help with the suction created and the tablet can be placed under the tongue.

### Further Information:

#### Pill Swallowing Resources

<http://pillswallowing.com>

#### Medicines for Children

[www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk)

#### Pill Glide

<http://pillglide.co.uk>