

TB Medication Tips for Children

Most medicines that are used to treat TB infection and disease come as either a hard pill (tablet) or a capsule. Isoniazid, sometimes abbreviated as INH, is available as a liquid but due to the sweetener use, it often causes diarrhea and may not be well tolerated by children.

The easiest way for children to take medicine is to swallow them as pills. Children as young as 5 years old may be able to learn to swallow pills. See page 3 for instructions on how to [teach your child to swallow pills](#).

For younger children or for those that can't swallow pills:

- Hard pills or tablets can be crushed with a commercial pill crusher, mortar and pestle, or a spoon against another spoon or bowl. Capsules can be opened.
- **For infants:** suspend or dissolve the pill particles/capsule contents in a small amount of liquid.
 - Water is best.
 - You can also use a small amount of breast milk or formula.
- Dispense this medication suspension to infants with a:
 - Syringe
 - Medicine dropper with larger tip; available at many pharmacies
 - Baby bottle - may need to make holes larger.
 - [MediBottle](#)
 - [Medicine-delivering pacifier](#) - may need to make hole larger.
- **For older children eating solids:**
 - Put a thin layer of a desirable soft food onto a spoon.
 - Place the pill particles/capsule contents on top of this food layer.
 - Top this with another thin layer of food. Give the child the dose of medication in this "sandwich".
 - Follow with additional plain food or liquid to wash it down.
 - Teach them to swallow it without chewing by practicing without the medication in place first. Chewing it isn't harmful to them but may cause a bad taste in their mouth.
- Good foods to use are any soft food your child likes. Some ideas include:
 - Chocolate sauce
 - Pudding
 - Ice cream

- Jelly or marmalade (useful at hiding the texture or granules of the medicine if this is an issue)
- Apple sauce or berry-sauce (better at hiding the red color of rifampin)
- Nutella
- Peanut butter
- Cream cheese
- Chili
- Oatmeal

General Tips:

- Plan to give medication at a time when your child should be hungry.
- Don't fight over taking medication. It can take up to 2 weeks before a child takes medication without a struggle. Let your child feel they have some control, like letting them make noncritical decisions such as what kind of food they use or what time of day they take the medication.
- If your child needs to take several different medications for TB each day, they should be taken all at once, not throughout the day, and they should be given close to the same time each day.
- Provide rewards, like stickers on the calendar or other praise, for taking medication without issue.
- Children usually tolerate TB medications well and rarely have side effects. However, if you have any concerns about side effects your child may be experiencing, call your TB healthcare provider right away.

Teaching Kids How to Swallow Pills



Learning how to swallow pills is hard for many adults and children. In fact, studies show that **26%** of children have a hard time swallowing pills. The benefits of swallowing pills can be: convenience for parents and adolescents (e.g., can carry them with you, does not need to be refrigerated), less concern with medication taste, and pills may be more effective than liquids or sprinkles. These tips and tricks can **make learning how to swallow pills easier**.

Things you should have on hand before learning to swallow pills:

- Small Dixie® cups or equivalent
- Candies of different increasing sizes (cupcake sprinkles, Nerds®, mini M&M's®, regular M&M's®, Good "N Plenty®)
- Empty pill gel capsules (if possible-ask your pharmacist)

STEP 1: Ask the child to swallow a sip of water and then praise the child (e.g., "Sally-you did a great job swallowing the water"). Please make sure not to let your child swish the water in their mouth.

STEP 2: Starting with the smallest candy, place the candy towards the back of the tongue and let it dissolve.

STEP 3: Place the smallest candy on the tongue and then take a sip of water and swallow the candy.

STEP 4: Once successful with steps 1-3, move on to the next candy size. This does not all have to happen at one time. It may take a few days or weeks for the child to build up their confidence. Each session should last about 5-10 minutes and should be fun.

NOTE: It is important to provide a lot of praise for your child throughout the process. Any step forward helps increase the likelihood that they will swallow pills in the future. You can always go back a step if needed.

STEP 5: Once the child successfully swallows the candy sizes (you should aim for the last candy size being similar in size to the pill), they can try an empty capsule, if possible, or the actual pill. You may also try to cut or chop the pill in halves/quarters (check with pharmacist if this is okay) first.

If the child has difficulty swallowing, here are some fun tips:

- Insert the pill in a spoonful of Jello® or pudding and let it slide down your child's throat. Have your child practice swallowing spoonfuls of the food without the medicine first.
- Dip the gel cap in ice water before swallowing to make the coating very slippery.
- Coat the pill with Magic Shell®. Pills should be placed in the freezer for 30 minutes before using them.
- Tear off a piece of Fruit Roll-Ups® or melt Starburst® candy in the microwave for 10-15 seconds to wrap around the pill prior to swallowing.
- Place pill or crushed pill in gel caps. This covering minimizes the bitter taste from the coating of the pill. Gel caps come in a variety of sizes; ask your physician or pharmacist for gel caps if you do not have them.