

How to give medicines: capsules

This leaflet gives tips about how to give capsules to children. Leaflets on individual medicines are available on the Medicines for Children website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



This leaflet has been written specifically about the use of medicines in children. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Capsules (general)

- Capsules should be swallowed whole with a glass of water, milk or juice.



Some capsules should be taken with food or milk. Other capsules work best on an empty stomach. There are a few capsules that **should not** be taken with certain foods, juices or milk. This should be shown on the medicine label. If you are not sure which food and drink your child should have with the medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist. Detailed information about what to do is given in the leaflet for each medicine on the Medicines for Children website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk

- Your child should **not** chew the capsule.

Mixing with food

The contents of some capsules can be mixed with a small amount of food. If you are not sure if your child's capsules can be mixed with food, speak with your child's doctor or pharmacist.

- Open the capsule and mix the contents with a teaspoon of soft food (e.g. yogurt, honey or jam) or a small amount (10 mL, which is about 2 teaspoons) of fruit juice or squash.
- Make sure your child swallows it straight away, without chewing. (The capsule contents may have a bitter taste, so you will need to use something strong-tasting to mask it, such as undiluted fruit squash.)

Dissolving in water

The contents of some capsules can be dissolved in water or juice. Your doctor will have told you how much liquid to use, and how much of it to give your child.

- Open the capsule and dissolve the contents in the right amount of water or fruit juice.
- Give the mixture to your child straight away, using an oral syringe or medicine spoon. You can get these from your pharmacist.

Dispersing capsules to give a part dose

Occasionally, you will need to give your child **part of a capsule**. Your doctor, pharmacist or nurse will tell you to disperse the contents of the capsule in a small amount of water and give only part of the dispersed medicine.

For example, to give 30 mg of a medicine that is available in a 50 mg capsule, disperse the contents in 5 mL of water. Once dissolved give only 3 mL of the mixture using an oral syringe. You can get an oral syringe from your pharmacist.

How to give a part dose

- You will need to measure 5 mL of water (for young babies use water that has been freshly boiled and then cooled). To do this put the tip of the oral syringe in water and pull the plunger back so that the top of the ring is at 5 mL. Aim the syringe into a small glass and push the plunger in slowly so that the water goes into the glass.
- Holding the capsule over the glass, carefully pull apart the two ends of the capsule shell and empty the contents into the water. Throw away the outer shell.
- Mix the water and powder together vigorously – it may make a cloudy mixture. Keep mixing the solution until all lumps have dispersed.
- Using the oral syringe measure the required amount of the solution for the dose. Your doctor, pharmacist or nurse will tell you how much to give to your child.
- Pour any left over mixture into a tissue and put it in the bin. Do not pour the liquid down the sink and do not keep any liquid for another time.

The content of **some** capsules can be dispersed in a small amount of juice or squash. Check the medicine label to find out if your child's capsule can only be taken with water.

Sprinkle capsules

'Sprinkle capsules' can be sprinkled in food. This information will be shown on the medicine label.

- Open the capsule and sprinkle the granules into a teaspoonful of soft food (e.g. yogurt, honey or jam).
- Make sure your child swallows it all straight away, without chewing.
- These capsules can also be swallowed whole with a glass of water, juice or milk.

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk