

How to Give Your Pet Liquid Medications:

Tips to Help Make the Experience Less Stressful for Both of You

If you've ever had to give your pet liquid medicine, you probably know that the process can be a bit tricky. Not all dogs and cats are fans of having liquid squirted into their mouths. Fortunately, most pets can learn to take liquid meds without too much fuss.

Follow These Steps

- 1 Fill the syringe or dropper with the prescribed amount of medication.
- 2 Hold the syringe or dropper in one hand, and use your other hand to hold your pet's head still by grasping her upper or lower jaw firmly but gently.
- 3 Insert the tip of the syringe or dropper into one side of your pet's mouth—between the cheek and the teeth—aiming the device toward the back of your pet's head.
- 4 Depress the syringe plunger or squeeze the dropper slowly and steadily until it's empty (and hopefully all the medication has been dispensed into your pet's mouth). If you need to give a large amount of liquid (more than 2 milliliters), you may want to break this into a few steps by giving some of the medication, allowing your pet the chance to swallow it, then giving the rest of it.
- 5 Hold your pet's mouth closed, and gently stroke her throat or blow on her nose until she swallows.
- 6 Reward your pet with lots of praise and a vet-approved treat.



Do

- Ask your veterinary team to show you how to fill the syringe or dropper and administer the medication.
- Give your pet something pleasant to associate with the process before you get started. Ask your vet if you can put a pea-sized dollop of pet-safe peanut butter or another spreadable treat around the end of the syringe or dropper. Let your pet lick it off. Just be sure the end of the syringe or dropper doesn't get clogged. Repeat a few times in 1 or 2 sessions. (Typically, you'll need to get the medicine into your pet quickly, so you'll only have a short time to get your pet used to the syringe or dropper.)
- Give another dose if your pet squirms and *none* of the medicine makes it into her mouth.
- Call your vet to find out what he or she recommends if your pet swallows some—but not all—of the medicine. You may need to wait until the next dose to try again. See the sidebar for advice if your pet just won't put up with this medication dosing method.
- Give your pet the prescribed medication for the length of time your vet has indicated.

Don't

- Tilt your pet's head back, which could cause her to inadvertently inhale the medication.
- Keep trying to give the medicine if your pet struggles excessively or becomes extremely agitated. Take a breather, and try again after your pet calms down.
- Hesitate to call your veterinarian with follow-up questions or additional tips.

If Your Pet Just Isn't Cooperating

Some dogs may need to be restrained during the process. If you don't have a helper, you may be able to keep your cat or smaller dog still by wrapping her securely—but not too tightly—in a towel like a burrito, keeping only her head free. Hold your pet against your body as you give the medication.

Alternatively (especially if your pet resists being restrained), you can try the “less is more” approach: Have your pet sit comfortably, then gently pull the cheek out on one side and quickly give the medication.

Other dogs may feel more comfortable if you sit on the floor and hold them in your lap or against your body. With a larger dog, you can also try standing behind her and having her sit against your legs.

If none of these methods work and your pet doesn't mind taking pills, ask your veterinarian if the medication can be given in pill form or if other dosing options (or other medication choices) are available.