

Pets 101: How do I give my cat a pill?

Even the most dedicated cat lover may find that "pilling" a cat is trying, at best. A few cats are agreeable, but most of us learn just how sharp a cat's teeth and claws actually are when we try to give him a pill.

No matter what [technique](#) you use, here are some helpful tips:

Do check with your veterinarian on all aspects of your cat's care.

Do make pill-time a positive experience. Pick a time when you and your cat are relaxed, give lots of gentle hugs, and speak soothingly. Tell kitty you have his best interests in mind and you know he doesn't like this. The exact words don't matter, and most of us agree that the cat won't understand exactly what you're saying. Cats do, however, understand intentions, and our task is to convince him that our intentions are good.

Do trim your cat's claws beforehand if needed.

Do take your cat to a room with a door you can close, especially if you have other pets or small children who may be a distraction. This is especially important if kitty spits the pill out; you don't want another animal (or child) to eat it. You also don't want him to run away and hide.

Do give kitty his favorite treat afterward (ask your vet if food with the pill is OK). He may start to look forward to pill time if he knows he'll get his reward. Make sure it's something kitty really loves, like cream cheese, tuna, or prepared cat treats.

Don't make it a power struggle. If you're having trouble, it's better to let the cat go than get frustrated or upset. Take a break, give plenty of hugs, and try again.

If you have trouble with an especially resistant cat, try this: kneel over the cat (one knee on each side) with his head facing forward and one hand pressed against his chest. Cross your ankles behind his rear legs so he can't back out. Sit on him *very* lightly, and pet him as you speak gentle words.

No matter what technique you try and whether it's a success or a failure at first, the most important thing to remember is that cats can and do learn. Even if your cat acts like he's been mortally offended, he will, eventually, forgive you. He might even remind you when it's pill time.

For more info: More tips on [technique](#)

