

Practice makes perfect –

A training guide for parents, caregivers and children

Teaching children to swallow medicines is all about practice. Using lollies that are easy to swallow can be an effective way of practising taking tablets or capsules. Children begin practising with small lollies and progressively increase to larger sized lollies, which are comparable in size to tablets or capsules.

Make sure the exercise is fun and relaxed, and keep sessions short so the child does not become tired or stressed. Be sure to encourage the child's successes along the way and be supportive. The child can be encouraged to try different

head positions when swallowing, e.g. head tilted back, slightly forward, in the centre, to the left and to the right. Let the child find which head position suits them best.

You will need:

- Cake decorating balls or sprinkles
- Tic-Tacs®
- Mini M&Ms®
- M&Ms® or Smarties®

(or other appropriately sized lollies)

WHAT TO DO

1

Ask the child to take a few sips of water or their favourite drink to moisten their mouth and throat

2

Start with the smallest sized lolly (e.g. cake decorating balls or sprinkles) and explain to the child that you are going to teach them a simple way to swallow pills

3

Show them by putting a single lolly towards the back of your tongue, taking a gulp of water and swallowing the lolly.

4

Tell the child it is their turn. They should keep trying up to three times if they are unable to swallow, and they can chew the lolly if the third time is unsuccessful.

5

Repeat this until the child is comfortable with a particular sized lolly – this usually takes about three successful tries. Then move up to a slightly larger size lolly and repeat the procedure until there is success at this level.

6

Continue to move up to larger sizes until the child succeeds at swallowing a lolly of a comparable size to a pill (e.g. M&Ms®, Smarties®). At this point the child should be able to swallow most pills with minimal problems.



For further information see: The University of Calgary website 'Better than a spoonful of sugar – how to swallow pills', which contains videos showing ways to teach children to swallow tablets and capsules:

www.research4kids.ucalgary.ca/pillswallowing