



Leeds Children's
Hospital

Swallowing tablets

Top tips and techniques to help you
conquer swallowing tablets

Information for patients





Introduction

- Swallowing is **natural**. You do it every time you eat or drink
- Your windpipe is **flexible** and can expand if it needs to
- When swallowing a tablet, your body works so that you do not choke
- A flap (called the epiglottis) closes over your windpipe so the tablet can move slowly down your food pipe

Tips

- Stand or sit up straight
- Relax
- Take a deep breath
- Don't talk
- Take a drink of water so that your mouth isn't dry before attempting to swallow the tablet



Practice makes perfect

- Practise the techniques using tablet shaped sweets
- It's best to **start small** and work up to something the same size as your tablet
- Don't rush - try to **swallow two or three** of each size sweet before you move on to a bigger one



You could try:

Hundreds-and-thousands, silver balls, M&M's Minis®, Tic Tacs®, Smarties®, jelly sweets and marshmallows cut into different sizes or children's vitamin tablets

Techniques*

1. Head Backward

- Place the tablet on the tip of your tongue
- Take a sip of water
- Tilt your head back and swallow

2. Head Forward

- Place the tablet on the back of your tongue
- Take a sip of water
- Tilt your chin down towards your chest and swallow

3. Use a Straw

- Place the tablet on the back of your tongue
- Use a straw to quickly drink water or juice
- Concentrate on swallowing - don't think about the tablet

4. Fizzy Drinks

- Use a cold fizzy drink instead of water or juice
- Put your tablet on your tongue and drink straight from the bottle

5. Sports Cap Bottle

- Place the tablet on the back of your tongue
- Purse your lips around the sports cap and squeeze the bottle
- The shape your lips make and the higher pressure from the sports cap should make it easier to swallow the tablet

6. Soft Food Swallow

- Try putting your tablet on a teaspoon of soft food like yogurt, chocolate mousse or banana and then swallow them both together
- Or try chewing a piece of bread until it's really soft, then put the tablet in your mouth and swallow them both together

Please check with your doctor or pharmacist before attempting this method to ensure your tablets can be taken with food.

7. Big Gulp Method

- Put the tablet in your mouth, then drink as much water as you can, holding it all in your cheeks
- Swirl the water round in your mouth for 10 seconds
- Take a big gulp until all the water has gone - the tablet should have gone with it!

****These techniques are suggestions based upon anecdotal evidence and experience.***

SOME FINAL ADVICE...

- Don't overdo it; practice little and often.

If you are still having problems:

Don't be discouraged.

Learning to swallow tablets can be tricky and further help is available. Please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

GOOD LUCK!

References

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Produced by: The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust Print Unit • WNA1377

Publication date
04/2015

Review date
04/2017