

How to prepare your medicine if you have difficulty swallowing

Advice from *Don't Rush to Crush*

Your medicines

Keep an up-to-date list of all the medicines you take.

Your pharmacist can tell you the best way to prepare and take each medicine.

There are **4 separate ways** to take your medicine. Ask your pharmacist to write the best method for each one of your medicines on your medicine list.

- Use an oral liquid medicine
- Crush the tablet
- Open the capsule
- Disperse the tablet in water (let the tablet break up into a mixture)

Only use the method indicated by your pharmacist.

Equipment

You will need a medicine cup or an oral dispenser. You might also need a mortar and pestle, or a tablet crusher. You can buy these from your local pharmacy.



Medicine measure



Oral dispenser



Mortar and pestle



Tablet crusher

Liquid medicines

Some people who have difficulty swallowing, cannot safely swallow thin fluids like water.

Most liquid medicines are thin fluids. Ask your pharmacist if a liquid medicine is suitable for you.

If your speech pathologist or your doctor has told you to have thickened fluids, follow the special instructions in the section called '*If you must take your medicines with thickened fluids or soft foods*' on the next page.

If you are taking a liquid medicine, always measure the dose using a medicine measure or an oral dispenser.

If you cough, choke or become short of breath after taking a liquid medicine, contact your doctor or speech pathologist to make sure this still a safe option for you.

Safety points

- Some medicines can cause harm if you crush or disperse them.
- Never crush or disperse a medicine unless your pharmacist has told you that it is safe.
- If you notice a change to your medicines, ask your pharmacist for the best way to take them. Always check, even if the change seems small, like switching from a capsule to a tablet, or changing the brand.
- Only crush or disperse one medicine at a time.
- Use water that is at room temperature.
- Prepare your medicines just before you need them.
- After you have taken all your medicines, have about half a glass of water (or thickened fluid). This helps wash the medicine past the mouth, throat, and oesophagus and into the stomach.
- Some medicines can make your mouth feel numb for a short time. If this happens, do not have hot food or drinks because you might burn your mouth.

Crush the tablet

If you must take your medicines with thickened fluids or soft food:

- Crush the tablet using a mortar and pestle. Do not use a tablet crusher because you can't get all the medicine out unless you rinse it with water.
- Add about a tablespoon of yoghurt or apple puree to a small cup or bowl.
- Tap the crushed powder out onto the food and mix well.
- Take the mixture straight away. Make sure you get all the food from the cup or bowl.
- Clean the mortar by wiping it out with a cloth once a day.



If you can take your medicines with water:

- Crush the tablet with a mortar and pestle or a tablet crusher.
- Add 20 mL of water to the powder and mix well.
- Draw the mixture into an oral dispenser or add to a medicine cup.
- Rinse the mortar and pestle or the tablet crusher with 10 mL of water, then repeat the rinse again.
- Add the rinses to the oral dispenser or the medicine cup.
- Take the mixture straight away.
- Rinse the medicine cup or oral dispenser with another 10 mL of water and take this as well. This will help make sure you get all the medicine.

Open the capsule

If you must take your medicines with thickened fluids or soft food:

- Add a tablespoon of yoghurt or apple puree to a small cup or bowl.
- Open the capsule or sachet and pour the contents onto the food. Mix well.
- Take the mixture straight away. Make sure you get all the food out of the cup or bowl.



If you can take your medicines with water:

- Open the capsule or sachet and pour the contents into a medicine cup or an oral dispenser.
- Add 10 mL of water to the medicine cup or oral dispenser and mix well.
- Take the mixture straight away.
- Rinse the medicine cup or oral dispenser with another 10 mL of water. Take this as well so that you get all the medicine.

Disperse the tablet

This method is not suitable for people who need thickened fluids:

- Place the tablet in a medicine cup or an oral dispenser.
- Add 10 mL of water.
- Leave the tablet to break up. It may take a few minutes.
- Shake or stir gently. When it is ready it will look like a cloudy or gritty mixture, with no big pieces left.
- Take the mixture as soon as it is ready.
- Rinse the medicine cup or the oral dispenser with another 10 mL of water and take this as well. This will help make sure you get the all the medicine.

