

## Giving Pills to Your Dog

The time to teach your dog to take a pill is before she is old and sick and finicky. You can buy empty capsules of different sizes at many health food stores for practice.

Peanut butter and canned cat food are the old standbys for administering pills. Try putting the medicine in a spoonful of one or the other and offering the conglomeration to your dog. Commercially made pill pockets are a great invention. Coconut oil is another newer method to try.

**Meatball Method** – Buy a package of frozen, cooked meatballs. Thaw a frozen meatball and cut in half. Put a meatball half in each hand. Wave your hands and show your dog and get her excited: “Lookie here! I have meatballs! Yum! Do you want them?” Make sure she knows you have a piece in each hand.

When she is really excited about the meatball, give her one of the halves. Immediately, before she has even bitten down, stick the other half right in front of her. Most dogs will gulp the first piece in order to get the second. Repeat.

After your dog is happily gulping the first meatball half to get to the second, embed the pill in half a meatball. Give it to her first, then follow up with the plain piece.

If your dog is already pill savvy, use three to five meatball halves. Deliver them rapidly to your dog, chattering happily if that gets your dog eating faster. Start and end the process with plain ones and put the one with the pill in the middle.

Just for insurance that this method keeps working for you, it is good to do this routine sometimes without pills as well.

**Squeeze-Tube Method** – This method which is best used for medium to small pills takes a little practice before you can use it in real life.

Buy some food grade squeeze tubes. One brand is Coghlan’s.

Fill a tube with something squeezable that your dog really likes. You can use canned dog food as long as it is not chunky. You can make mixtures of foods like cream cheese, canned pumpkin, peanut butter and/or tuna that has been run

through a food processor. You may need to experiment a little to get the right texture.

Teach your dog to eat out of the tube while squeezing it. Give him a couple squeezes a day for a week or two. (Refrigerate the tube in between sessions, and clean it out and replace the filling as necessary to ensure that the contents are fresh and safe.) He will learn that great stuff comes out of the tube, and that the best way to eat it is just to open his mouth and let you squeeze it in.

After your dog has learned to eat from the tube, administering pill is usually a cinch. Prepare your tube and squeeze it so some of the mixture moves into the neck, about to come out. Stick the pill down in it. Offer it to the dog. As he opens his mouth and starts to lick, squeeze. The pill rides in, pushed by the food behind it.

Syringe Method – Some dogs will accept a syringe of liquid better than a pill. Get some syringes without needles from your vet or pharmacy. Get a mortar and pestle or some other way to mash it up without losing any of the powder. Mix the powder with a good tasting liquid such as broth, yogurt or a puree like baby food. Suck it up in the syringe and administer to the dog. As with the meatball method, frequently administering syringes of yummy stuff without pills will help keep this method effective.

Pilling – Hold the top of the muzzle with your left ring finger and thumb above the upper canines. Lift the head as far as it needs to be lifted for the lower jaw to loosen. Then place your right hand with the pill in between your first two fingers and thumb between the upper canines and at the back of the mouth leaving the pill on the back of the tongue. Use your left hand to close the mouth and wait for your dog to swallow. You may need to blow gently on your dog's nose to encourage them to swallow. It is best to use the counterconditioning training listed above to allow for this process to be implemented.

Excerpt from Remember Me by Eileen Anderson