



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!**

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Developed by: Karen Meldrum, Clinical Psychology Intern  
Rebecca Waldron, Clinical Psychologist  
Rebecca Hames, Clinical Psychologist and  
Jenny Brown, Paediatric Pharmacist

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