How to Administer Liquid Medication to Your Cat

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

step-by-step guide to giving liquid medication

Q. How do I give my cat a liquid medication?

A. If your cat is not on dietary restrictions, your veterinarian said the medication can be given with food, and the dose is small, the easiest way may be to mix it with a small amount of canned food. It is best to give a small amount of the food without the medication first. This lowers your cat's suspicion index. It is best not to mix the medication in an entire meal, since if the cat does not eat the whole meal, she will not get the appropriate dose of medication.

If your cat will not take the medication in food, cannot have food with the medication, or the dose is too large, then it must be given by hand.

TIP

Have your cat's nails trimmed prior to giving the medication. (However, do not try to do one procedure right after the other.)

1. Get the medication ready - shake the bottle if necessary, and withdraw the appropriate amount of liquid into the dropper or oral syringe provided by your veterinarian. Place the filled dropper or syringe where it will be handy.
2. Bring your cat to the place you will give the medication, talking to her in a happy voice. If you do not sound worried or concerned, your cat will be less likely to feel that way as well.
3. Sometimes, it is helpful to wrap the cat in a blanket or very large towel so just her head is sticking out. Place her back end against something so she cannot back away from you. I have found that when giving medication to my Siamese cat, who fights against it literally tooth and nail, wrapping him in a large towel and then placing him between my knees as I sit on the floor gives me the most control. Other people like to place the cat more at eye level - on a table.
4. Pick up the syringe or dropper. (If you are right-handed, use your right hand.)

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5. Using your other hand, gently (but firmly) grasp your cat's head from above with your thumb on one side of the hinge of the jaw and your fingers on the other.
6. Place the tip of the eyedropper or syringe into the mouth in the space right behind the long canine teeth. This area has only a few very small teeth.
7. Advance the eyedropper or tip of the syringe into the mouth until it is just past the teeth.
8. Slowly administer the medication. Give the medication in small amounts with a slight pause between each portion. Be very careful not to give it faster than your cat can swallow it. Do not try to give all of the liquid at once, since this may cause choking or vomiting. Your cat may spit out some of the medication. If this occurs, do not re-administer another dose unless you feel the cat spit out the entire dose.
9. Hold your cat's mouth closed, and have her head in a normal position, which will make swallowing easier. Gently rub or blow on your cat's nose; this often stimulates a cat to lick her nose, and then swallow.
10. Wipe off any medication that got on your cat's face using a soft, moist cloth.
11. Talk softly and stroke your cat, or give another type of praise your cat will enjoy, e.g., a food treat. This will make the next time easier. And remember, the more efficiently you can give the medication, the easier it is on both of you.
12. Rinse the syringe/dropper with tap water and return the medication to the refrigerator, if necessary.

Although pictures are worth a thousand words, seeing a live demonstration is even better. If your veterinarian prescribes liquid medication for your cat, have one of the veterinary staff show you how to give it.

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