

Cardiac medications are for life. Here are ways to help condition your pet to happily take their medications.

Ensuring your pet is eating is of utmost importance. Dogs and cats may refuse familiar foods when taste and texture are altered by the addition of tablets, capsules, or powders. Below are ways to encourage your furry companion to take their medications willingly!

Find foods your pet likes!

Try a variety of pet safe foods (free of onions, garlic, raisins, and artificial sweeteners), until you find a good routine with your pet. You may need to rotate through a couple different foods to keep your pet happy. Food portions should be about twice the size of the tablet or capsule, if larger it may be difficult to detect and separate from the food. Using pea-sized portions can help with training and trialing the new food!

Foods to try!

- Cream Cheese
- Processed Meat
- Scrambled Eggs
- Whipped Cream
- Salmon Cream Cheese
- Bratwurst
- Mashed Potato
- Hotdogs
- Nutri-Cal Paste
- Peanut Butter
- Plain Greek Yogurt
- Pill Pockets
- Puppperoni Dog Treats
- Paté-Style Canned Food
- Processed/Soft Cheese
- Bacon-Flavored Processed Cheese

Tips and tricks

For bitter medications like clopidogrel (Plavix), enclose the tablet in an empty gel capsule before coating with food. These are available at health food stores and online, (Search: Gelatin capsule). Some medications need to be given with a syringe of water to wash them down. Tuna juice, coconut milk or low sodium meat broth is a great substitute for water. Purina Hydrocare is a flavored broth shown to increase water consumption in cats. Offering this after medication administration as a reward is also a positive way to wash medications down!



IMG Source: https://vmc.vet.osu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/conditioning_to_take_medications.pdf

Add texture!

For pets who can find medications in our pea sized foods, you can add crunchy foods to disguise the added texture of a medication. You can add crushed potato chips, panko chips, dog or cat food, bacon bits, cheese crackers, pita chips, tortilla chips. These can be sprinkled, rolled or dipped into the food as an additive. Some cats like Fortiflora (probiotic) powder coating pill pockets to further hide the medication.



Techniques

1-2-3 Method

Make three portions of food, complete with textural additives. Feed them one at a time in quick succession, so your pet can happily anticipate three portions in a row. Add medications when/if needed to the middle portion. It may help to develop a cue for medications, such as “Here are your snacks!”, or any phrases like that to get them excited. Add the phrase just before feeding the first portion of food.

Grass is Always Greener

If it is safe to do so, feed any other animal or person in the house the first bite. The competition for a bite of food increases the chance of acceptance. Alternate three portions between the pet and other companions (dog/cat/human) as in the 1-2-3 method, making absolutely certain that the patient who needs the medication gets the portion with the pill or capsule inside.

Conditioning to Liquid Medications

Use tuna juice, meat baby food, plain yogurt or Hill’s A/D or other favorite canned food mixed with water.

1. Feed from a syringe (preferably an oral or slip-slip syringe). If the pet will not approach the syringe, feed normally with the syringe near by up to feeding your pet from it.
2. Work at the level of your pet; they should engage willingly, if not take a step back until they approach. It may take some experimentation to find what your pet likes, it will be with it when you and your pet both have positive experiences with medications long-term.
3. When your pet will eat willingly from the syringe, mix in liquid medication. It may be helpful to use the 1-2-3 method and use 3 syringes, the middle dose containing the medication

Techniques for Pets on Special Diets

Canned and dry prescription diets can also be used to give pills. For textural additives, crush the dry diet (or add any foods on page 1 that are approved by your veterinarian). Marshmallow creme are usually safe for pets with allergies. Please confirm with your pets primary vet if your pet has severe allergies or diabetes.

Beware of Food Aversion!

Food aversion in pets taking medication can be a potential risk. We would recommend refraining from putting any medications in your pets food bowl as your pet may begin to associate food with medications, resulting in a decreased appetite.