

# A Simple Way to Swallow Pills: The Head Posture Technique



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**Summary:** Swallowing pills can be hard for many children, youth and even adults. But there is help! Dr. Kaplan and colleagues at the University of Calgary have developed a simple way to help people to swallow pills.

## Does your child or teen have problems swallowing pills?

Swallowing pills can be hard for many children, youth and even adults. This can cause a lot of stress for everyone. But there is help! Dr. Kaplan and colleagues at the University of Calgary have developed a simple way to help people to swallow pills.

## The “Head Posture Practice” swallowing technique

Most people try to swallow with their head in the ‘centre’ position. But it turns out that many people swallow better if they try a different head position.

It may be easier for some people to swallow if they:

- Turn their heads to one side;
- Turn their heads down slightly;
- Turn their heads up slightly.

If your child is having problems with swallowing pills, try different head positions to see which one works best.

## Watch the Video to Learn How!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zxqs7fHJQc>

## Remember!

Be prepared. It will help if you learn and practice how to swallow pills first. This makes it easier to help your child or teen.

Practice with candy. Small hard candies like Tic Tacs or M&Ms work the best. Have your child or teen practice for 14 days (a few minutes each evening).

Be patient. Learning to swallow pills is like learning any skill; it takes time and practice. It's important to practice with candy for at least 14 days. Using this method too quickly with medications and supplements causes problems. Children can give up on this method quickly if they don't have success swallowing their medications.

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## References

BJ Kaplan, RA Steiger, J Pope, A Marsh, M Sharp, SG Crawford. Successful treatment of pill-swallowing difficulties with head posture practice. *Paediatr Child Health* 2010;15(5):e1-e5.

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## About this Document

Written by Dr. Bonnie Kaplan (PhD, University of Calgary) and members of the CHEO Mental Health Information Committee of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO).

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## Disclaimer

Information in this fact sheet may or may not apply to your child. Your health care provider is the best source of information about your child's health.