Giving Your Cat Oral Medications

1. Relax. If your cat senses that you are upset or anxious, it will be, too! Make sure you have all the medication ready to give (tablets and capsules loose, liquids drawn up in oral syringes) before you catch the cat. Coating the tablet with butter or some other tasty substance such as tuna or anchovy paste will lubricate the medication and give it a desirable taste. This may make it easier to medicate reluctant cats. It may also be helpful to have another person standing ready in case you need assistance.

2. Place your cat on a slippery, slick surface such as a table or counter top. This will keep it from getting a grip with its claws and running away. Sometimes it may be helpful to wrap your cat in a towel or blanket, so that its feet will be restrained. It is always useful to trim your cat's claws before attempting medication therapy.

3. With one hand, calmly grasp the top of the cat's head. The tips of your thumb and index finger should be positioned at opposite corners of the mouth on the cat's upper lip.

4. Gently tilt the cat's head back so that its chin is facing upward.

5. Holding the pill between the thumb and index finger of the other hand, place downward pressure with your middle finger on the front of the cat's lower jaw. This pressure, together with tilting the cat's head, will cause the cat to open its mouth. If it does not, then use your middle finger to gently pry open the lower jaw.

6. Quickly drop or slide the pill as far back in the mouth or throat as possible. Once the pill is positioned in the back of the mouth, it is unlikely that the cat will spit it out!

7. If you are giving liquid, do not tilt your cat's chin up. Instead, introduce the liquid filled syringe just past the lower teeth and slowly squirt small amounts into the mouth. Pause between amounts to allow your cat to swallow all the liquid.

8. Studies have shown that tablets and capsules do not get stuck between the throat and the stomach if a small amount of water (6ml or about 1 teaspoonful) is given immediately after giving the medication. This can be done via a medicine dropper or syringe. If your cat is calm and willing, offering it a small saucer with a tablespoonful or milk or tuna juice will make sure that the medication gets washed down to the stomach. Check with your veterinarian or pharmacist to see what foods and liquids are compatible with the medication you are giving.

9. If you think the cat has not swallowed the medication, blowing in its face or gently rubbing its throat may stimulate the cat to swallow.

10. Excessive salivation may be seen in some cats after receiving medications. This is not harmful and will subside once the cat relaxes.