



What can we try when our patients, especially children, struggle to take their medications? Here are a range of possible strategies from the literature. You may need to try or combine several approaches to support any given individual. **Scan the QR code to read our research review** for more important details about all of these strategies, including discussion of the evidence behind the techniques. This list was compiled for children but may be useful for older patients as well.

Important note: You should NEVER modify a medication or its delivery without consulting the pharmacist. Some medicines cannot be safely or effectively modified by specific methods.

Modify the medication*

- Determine if **alternate forms** of the medication are available (e.g., liquid, capsule, chewable, dissolvable).
- With pharmacist support, **modify the medication** by crushing, opening capsules to mix in a carrier food/liquid, or encasing in a flavorless capsule
- Is **thickening** an option for patients who cannot safely swallow thin liquid medications? Note that some medicines cannot or should not be thickened.

Modify the delivery*

- Try a commercial pill **lubricant** and/or taking with naturally thick liquid food (e.g., yogurt, pudding, fruit puree)
- Use a **sensory carrier, chaser, or distraction**; mask strong flavors with other food/liquid with or after the medicine, chill the medicine or numb the tastebuds with cold prior to giving it, offer a “distraction smell,” etc.
- Try commercial **pill-swallowing cups** or straws
- Take with **warm or carbonated liquid**

Build skills and confidence

- Offer **reassurance, information, modeling**, and/or pair with **rewards**
- Offer **choice & control** around delivery
- **Relaxation** strategies
- **Shaping**; Begin with tiny pieces of candy/consumable and gradually increase until it's the size of the target medication
- Practice with a range of **head positions** until a preferred position is found ([video here](#))
- **Pop bottle method** ([resources here](#))
- **Psychotherapy**

**Pharmacy consult needed. Some medications cannot be modified, taken with food/certain foods, certain temperatures of liquid, etc.*

