

Pill school

Supporting children to move from liquid medicines to tablets or capsules (pills)

Your child is currently taking liquid medicines, which could be changed to capsules or tablets (pills). We believe that your child might benefit from pill school. This is a one-off short teaching session, where we'll introduce your child to different pill-swallowing techniques. This will increase their confidence so that they can swallowing pill medicines.

Advantages of pill medicines

We know that some children find liquid medicines easier to swallow, but there are some advantages to swallowing pills. Pill swallowing is an important skill to learn. Taking part in this training will give your child a life skill that will help them as they grow up.

- Pills are easier to give, because you do not need to calculate the amount (dose) needed.
- Generally it's easier to store tablets or capsules.
- Generally it's easier to carry pill medicine around, for example to school or when travelling.
- Pills generally have a longer expiry date than liquid medicines.
- Generally it's easier to get pills from your local community pharmacy.
- Pills do not have the unpleasant tastes that some liquids medicines have.

Pill school lesson

Research shows that a 30-minute lesson is enough for many children aged 3 and over to learn the skills and confidence they need to swallow pills.

If your child's in hospital (as an inpatient or to attend a clinic appointment), we can arrange a suitable time for the lesson. The lesson will be given by a play specialist, nurse, pharmacist, or someone else in your child's clinical team. Alternatively, your GP practice or local community pharmacy may be able to do the training with your child. The teaching will go at the right pace for your child, and we'll only ask them to do what they feel comfortable with. All staff delivering pill school are trained.

It's important to know that taking pills is optional. If your child still does not want to take a tablet or capsule after the lesson, that's absolutely fine, and will be respected.

During the lesson

Your child will be asked about their experiences taking tablets, and we'll show them a technique that they can try with sweets. The teaching will work up from a small sweet to a sweet that is close to the size of their medicine.

Different techniques will be tried depending on your child's preferences. For example:

- different head positions
- using water or squash
- using a cup, straw or sports cap bottle
- using soft food (such as yoghurt) to help with swallowing

After the lesson

If possible, your child's prescription will be changed to a tablet or capsule, and your child will be asked to swallow 1 dose of the medicine before leaving the site where the training has been done. If necessary (for example, if the training was done in hospital), your child's GP will be contacted to let them know of the change.

The pill school teacher will also explain how you can support your child to continue with pill swallowing at home.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about pill school or your child's medicines, please speak to the doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

You can also contact the Evelina London medicines helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003 Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm, option 2 for medicine enquiries.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** gstt.pals-gstt@nhs.net

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please contact the service your child is seeing.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **phone** 111 **web** www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web** www.nhs.uk

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