



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Coping with Medicine

Children or teens may need medicine to manage their disease. Some medicines may have side effects, like unwanted changes in their mood or how they look.

- Your child is taking medicine to slow or stop their disease or symptoms. It's also so they can get back to doing the things they enjoy. Parents can support their child by listening to their feelings and making sure that they take their medicine.
- Remind your child how important it is to take the medicine as their doctor or health care provider has recommended.
- It's important for you to accept and validate how your child feels about taking their medicine and maintain expectations. It's normal to have negative feelings about difficult side effects.

Medicines by Mouth

Your child may need to take medicine by mouth. This can be hard if they've never swallowed pills before or if they're not used to swallowing pills (Picture 1). Practicing swallowing pills will help build your child's skills and confidence.

When teaching your child to swallow pills, give them a lot of praise and positive attention. Make small goals to help them work on the bigger goal of taking their medicine.

- First, have your child take a sip of water. Then, have them swallow small candies. Make each piece bigger than the last until they're ready to take their medicine. Use candy like: Nerds®, M&M's®, M&M's Minis®, and Good & Plenty®.
- If your child doesn't like the taste of the medicine, put it in pudding, applesauce, or sticky foods like Fruit Roll-Ups™ or AirHeads®.



Picture 1 Try different head positions when swallowing pills – head up, down, centered, or to the side

Medicines by Injection

Some medicines use a needle and are given as a shot (injection) or directly into a vein using an IV (intravenous tube). To help with needles, have your child relax their body and distract their mind. This can calm their stress.

- Relaxing the body and focusing on something else can help reduce pain from an injection or nausea caused by certain medicines, like methotrexate.
- Have your child take deep belly breaths in through their nose and out through their mouth. Young children might find it helpful to blow bubbles.
- Your child can also do these to relax or distract themselves:
 - Tense up different muscles in their body, then relax them. This is called progressive muscle relaxation.
 - Think of a place they want to be.
 - Watch a favorite show or video.
- There is a device you can buy called Buzzy®. It's used to help with injection pain. The Buzzy is a toy bee with cold wings that vibrates. It blocks or slows down pain signals from going to your child's brain.

Coping With Injections

Help your child stay positive about their injections by having them say things like, "I can do this," or "I'm an expert with shots." This will make getting injections easier and less painful.

- Your child may want to put off their injection. This can make it harder to cope and can build anxiety. Instead, help them make a plan. Choose a day and time for their injection, as well as what they can do to help them get through it.
- Give your child treats or rewards after their injection to keep them on track.
- Stay calm and trust your child's coping skills. When they use their coping skills, praise or reward them.
- If your child is afraid of needles, use a comfort hold to help them feel secure and stay safe during the procedure.
- Help them slowly face their fear of needles by looking at pictures or videos of other children getting injections, giving a practice injection, and then, progressing towards getting their injection.
- If your child gets light-headed or faints when they see needles, help them tense and release the muscles in their arms and legs to increase their blood pressure.

If these tips do not provide enough relief, you can get help from a psychologist or counselor.