

A CAT FRIENDLY APPROACH TO MEDICATION

Most cats need medication at some point. When cats are forced, medication time can be stressful and unsafe for both cats and carers.

Giving cats choice and positive experiences during medication time not only means that they are more likely to take their medication, it also helps reduce stress for everyone and protects your bond.

KEY POINTS

- Move slowly and calmly
- Use food, treats, and rewards
- Support your cat, don't force them
- Help is available if you need it

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

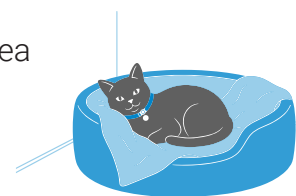
1 Choose the right time

- Give medication before normal mealtime
- Hungry cats are more likely to take food with medicine



2 Choose a quiet space

- Use a calm, familiar area
- Include bedding and smells your cat knows



3 Be prepared

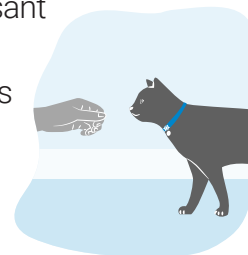
Before involving your cat, gather everything you need:

- The medication
- Cleaning supplies (for eye or skin medication, if needed)
- A helper (if available)
- Wet food your cat loves
- A bowl and spoon
- Treats and favourite toys



4 Let your cat come to you

- Medication time works best when your cat chooses to participate, rather than being forced
- Invite your cat to join in by tossing a treat, then offering a hand to sniff or rub against. Offering treats, praise and short play sessions makes medication time more pleasant for your cat
- Use slow, gentle movements
- All of this helps your cat learn that medication time predicts good things



MEDICATION TIME

For oral medicine

- Whenever possible, mix medicine into a small amount of tasty food.
- Giving medication in food means you do not need to handle your cat to give its medication.
- Check with your vet if medication can be crushed, capsules opened up, or mixed with water so that it can be added to tasty treats.
- Because cats smell medication easily:

Offer food without medication



Then food with medication



Follow quickly with food or treats without medication

- For sensitive cats, split doses into tiny portions and/or warm the food up a little.



For eye medicine

- Let your cat choose a comfortable position
- Stand/sit beside or behind your cat
- Offer treats during the process
- Gently clean the eye as instructed by your vet
- Hold medication above or to the side of the eye
- Do not approach from the front of the cat's face. This is scary and your cat won't let you put the medication in
- Gently pull back the upper eyelid and apply medication to the corner (where you can see some white of the eyeball)
- Give your cat a treat and a break
- Repeat on the other eye (if needed)



IMPORTANT → Do not touch the eye with the bottle or tube



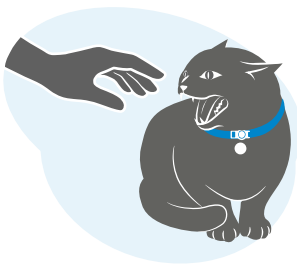
Skin or ear medicine

- Offer a tasty treat that distracts them for a while, like wet food on a lickimat
- Stand/sit beside or behind your cat
- Gently slide your hand along the body to the area that needs medicine put on
- Clean the area if recommended by your vet
- Apply the medication calmly and gently
- Give your cat another treat

Finish with a jackpot reward, even if you weren't able to give the medication. This could be:

- Extra treats
- Playtime
- A favourite activity

This helps your cat feel safer for the long term.



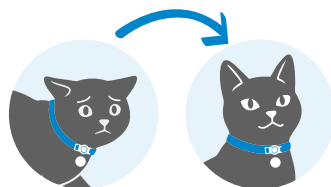
Support, don't force

Stop and pause if your cat:

- Hides or avoids you
- Freezes, hisses or growls
- Swipes or tries to bite
- Is stressed

Remember:

It's OK if you don't succeed on the first try. Building confidence can take time.



Never:

- Chase your cat
- Hold them down
- Scruff them or wrap them tightly in a towel

If giving your cat's medication is difficult, talk to your veterinarian about other options. Medication time shouldn't be scary, stressful or hurt your bond.

Stay calm, use rewards, and let your cat walk away if needed. You can always try again later.



NEED HELP?

Contact your vet. You can also contact our Behaviour Helpline for assistance (mail@rspcansw.org.au). For more information about caring for your pet, visit [Living with Pets - RSPCA New South Wales](#)