

# Giving children antibiotics when liquid preparations are not available

## Information for parents and carers

Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

The liquid forms of antibiotics are not always available.

So that your child gets the antibiotic they need, you have been given their medicine in a solid form, as tablets (pills) or capsules. The best way for your child to take their capsules or tablets is to swallow them whole:

- KidzMedz Cymru [has a useful guide \(6 Easy Steps\) on helping children to swallow pills.](#)
- Medicines for Children also has information on giving [tablets](#) and [capsules](#) to children.

## Making the antibiotic easier for your child to swallow

If your child is unable to swallow their antibiotic whole, you can use their tablets or capsules to make a liquid or softer version of the medicine that they may find easier to take.

Your child's doctor or pharmacist will tell you how much of the antibiotic to give (the dose). If you are using tablets, this may be half a tablet or a whole tablet. Where the dose is for half of a tablet you may find that the tablet is scored and breaks easily. You can buy a tablet cutter from your local pharmacy to help you cut the tablet accurately.

### Allergy advice

Always wear gloves and a mask when you are preparing the antibiotic for your child - to avoid any skin problems and to avoid inhaling the antibiotic.

Ask someone else to prepare the medicine for your child if you are allergic to:

- your child's antibiotic
- penicillin or cephalosporin antibiotics, and your child has been given amoxicillin, phenoxymethylpenicillin or cefalexin
- macrolide antibiotics, and your child has been given erythromycin, clarithromycin or azithromycin

If you are unsure whether preparing your child's medicine is safe for you, ask your pharmacist.

The advice below is for doses of half or whole tablets, or whole capsules.

**If your child has been prescribed a different dose please ask your pharmacist for advice on how to prepare and give the antibiotic.**

## How to prepare and give capsules

1. Wait until it is time to give the antibiotic dose.
2. Open the right number of capsules for the dose.
3. Tip the powder from inside the capsule into a small amount of drink or soft food (about a teaspoonful), and stir it in. The powder tastes bitter so use a drink with a strong flavour like blackcurrant cordial, or a food your child likes, such as jam, apple sauce or yogurt.
4. Make sure that your child takes the whole dose. If you are using a drink and some of the dose gets left behind, swirl a little more drink around the container and give it to your child to drink.
5. For liquids, use an oral syringe if it is easier.

## How to prepare and give tablets

Either disperse **or** crush the tablets before giving them to your child.

### Dispersing tablets to give your child a half or whole tablet dose

Use an oral syringe **or** a small glass or medicine cup to disperse the tablets. Choose the method that best suits you.

- Using an oral syringe:
  1. Pull out the plunger of a 10mL oral syringe.
  2. Place half a tablet or the whole tablet (depending on the dose) in the barrel of the syringe.
  3. Put the plunger back in and draw up about 5mL of water.
  4. Take the syringe out of the water and draw up about 2mL of air.
  5. Shake the syringe well and leave it until there are only tiny tablet particles in the liquid. This could take up to 10 minutes.
  6. The contents of the syringe will taste bitter. If it helps, draw up a small amount of a strongly flavoured drink, such as blackcurrant cordial, shake the syringe again, and give the mixture straight away.
  7. Make sure your child takes all of the syringe contents. If some of the dose gets left behind in the syringe, draw up a little more liquid and give it to your child.

- Using a small glass or medicine cup:
  1. Put half a tablet or the whole tablet (depending on the dose) in a small glass or medicine cup and add 5 to 10mL water.
  2. Stir well and leave until there are only tiny particles of the tablet in the liquid. This could take up to 10 minutes.
  3. The mixture will taste bitter. If it helps, add a small amount of a strongly flavoured drink, such as blackcurrant cordial. Stir the mixture and give it to your child straight away.
  4. Make sure that your child drinks all of the mixture. If some of the dose gets left behind in the glass or cup, add a little more liquid, swirl it around and give it to your child.

### Crushing tablets to give your child a half or whole tablet dose

1. Crush half a tablet or a whole tablet (depending on the dose) between two spoons or use a pestle and mortar or tablet crusher (if you have one).
2. The crushed tablets will taste bitter. If it helps, mix them with a small amount of a strongly flavoured drink, such as blackcurrant cordial or soft food that your child likes, such as jam, apple sauce or yogurt (about a teaspoonful).
3. Give the mixture to your child straight away.
4. Make sure that your child takes the whole dose. If you are using a drink and some of the dose gets left behind, add a little more water or liquid, swirl it around the container and give it to your child. If it is easier, use an oral syringe.

### What to do if your child has side effects

As with all medicines, if your child experiences any side effects from their antibiotic, you should report it to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also use the Yellow Card app (download from [Google Play](#) or [Apple App Store](#)) or the Yellow Card [site](#) to report side effects.

### Further advice

- [Medicines for Children](#) has information on giving different types of medicines to children.
- [KidzMedz Cymru](#) is a programme that teaches children and young people over the age of 5 how to swallow tablets and capsules safely.

### Off-label use of medicines

Making antibiotics easier to swallow in the ways described above is 'off-label' use. This is because the regulatory authority that approves medicines in the UK (the MHRA) has approved their use only if they are taken as solid tablets or capsules. Medicines are only used off-label after careful consideration of other available options. You can be confident that these options have been considered by the team caring for your child.