



Difficulties swallowing tablets

Department address and contact information:

Adult Speech and Language Therapy

Heartlands Hospital - 0121 424 0432

Good Hope Hospital - 0121 424 7056

Solihull Hospital- 0121 424 4126

- Swallowing is **natural**. You do it every time you eat or drink.
- Your windpipe is **flexible** and can expand if it needs to.
- When swallowing a tablet, your body naturally prevents you from choking.
- A flap (called the epiglottis) closes over your windpipe so the tablet can move slowly down your food pipe.

Some people have difficulties swallowing tablets, and the following techniques may help you swallow tablets more easily.

This advice may not be suitable for everyone. If you have any other swallowing difficulties, it is important to discuss which techniques are appropriate for you.

Tips

- Stand or sit up straight
- Relax
- Take a deep breath
- Don't talk
- Take a drink of water so that your mouth isn't dry before attempting to swallow the tablet

Techniques

1. Head backward

- Place the tablet on the tip of your tongue
- Take a sip of water
- Tilt your head back slightly and swallow

2. Head forward

- Place the tablet on the back of your tongue
- Take a sip of water
- Tilt your chin down towards your chest and swallow

3. Use a straw

- Place the tablet on the back of your tongue
- Use a straw to quickly drink water
- Concentrate on swallowing - don't think about the tablet

Information for Patients

4. Fizzy drinks

- Use a cold fizzy drink instead of water or juice
- Put your tablet on your tongue and drink straight from the bottle

5. Sports cap bottle

- Place the tablet on the back of your tongue
- Purse your lips around the sports cap and squeeze the bottle
- The shape your lips make and the higher pressure from the sports cap should make it easier to swallow the tablet

6. Soft food swallow

- Try putting your tablet on a teaspoon of soft food like yogurt, chocolate mousse or banana, and then swallow them both together
- **Or** try chewing a piece of bread until it's really soft, then put the tablet in your mouth and swallow them both together

Please check with your doctor or pharmacist before attempting this method to ensure your tablets can be taken with food.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version, please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk