

# Oral tablets and Capsules

## Overview

Tablets are an exact dose of a medication compressed into a solid dose form whereas with a capsule the medication is enclosed in a shell. They are the most common form of medication and are relatively easy to take.

## Process

1. Perform hand hygiene.
2. Pour some water into a glass near the person
3. Assist the person to sit upright
4. Place the correct medication into a medicine cup without touching it by tipping it into the lid of the bottle or popping out from the DAA directly into the cup (or use a PillBob®)
5. Hand the cup to the person or assist them to tip the medications into their mouth
6. Assist them to drink from the glass of water
7. Check they have swallowed all the tablets
8. Perform hand hygiene

## Risks/Considerations

- ⚠ If not specified by a speech pathologist or other professional, ask the person if they want to take all the tablets together, a few at a time or individually.
- ⚠ Crushing oral tablets or capsules before giving to people who have difficulty swallowing is not allowed unless a pharmacist or a registered nurse confirmed that it is safe to do so.
- ⚠ Slow release (SR), modified release (MR) long-acting (LA) prolonged release (XL), extended-release (ER, XR) and controlled release (CR) formulations should never be crushed
- ⚠ Lozenges are designed to act locally in the mouth and advise the person not to chew lozenges. Lozenges may pose a choking hazard and not be appropriate for people who are unable to follow these instructions.



# Don't rush to crush!

Slow release medicines must never be crushed.



## Crushing can increase the risk of drug toxicity.

If your patient has difficulty swallowing or has an enteral feeding tube in place, ask your pharmacist:

- can I crush it?
- can I dissolve or disperse it?
- can I open the capsule to crush contents?
- can I use a liquid formula alternative?
- can I give injection contents orally?

Abbreviations used for slow release products include:

Abbreviation	Meaning	Example
<b>SR</b>	Sustained/slow release	Veracaps SR (verapamil)
<b>MR</b>	Modified release	Diamicron MR (gliclazide)
<b>LA</b>	Long acting	Ritalin LA (methylphenidate)
<b>XL</b>	Extended release	Toprol XL (metoprolol)
<b>XR</b>	Extended release	Diabex XR (metformin)
<b>ER</b>	Extended release	Felodur ER (felodipine)
<b>CR</b>	Controlled release	Tegretol CR (carbamazepine)
<b>CD</b>	Controlled delivery	Cardizem CD (diltiazem)

Also do not crush **EC** (enteric coated), **HBS** (hydrodynamically balanced system) or **Contin** (continuous release) medications.

**Where brand names do not include this information ask your pharmacist for advice.**

For more information check SHPA Australia's *Don't Rush to Crush* book or the 'Crush' tab on eMIMS.

[health.wa.gov.au](http://health.wa.gov.au)

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Figure 1 WA Health Don't rush to crush