

Clinical Article: Forough, A. A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down? A review of strategies for making pills easier to swallow. Patient Preference and Adherence. 2018:12: 1337-1346.

Market Description:

“This review describes current strategies available to facilitate medication administration to otherwise healthy people with pill-swallowing difficulties. In general, restoring and maintaining the ability to swallow pills whole should ideally be the first choice in managing people with pill-swallowing difficulties. A number of strategies can potentially make it easier to swallow pills whole. These include postural adjustments, using pill-swallowing aids, and teaching pill-swallowing techniques. Where these are not successful or appropriate, then other approaches have to be considered using alternative formulations/routes of administration or deprescribing. If there is no other option, and it is not directly contraindicated for each specific medication dosage form, pills may be modified and mixed in foods and drinks to aid swallowing. In conclusion, people with pill-swallowing difficulties can benefit from a number of strategies designed to facilitate swallowing medications. However, these strategies should be further evaluated with regard to the evidence relating to both their efficacy and safety.”

Summary/What you need to know:

The oral route is generally the preferred method of drug administration as it is often more convenient, cost-effective and acceptable for patients. Pill-swallowing difficulties affect between 10 to 40% of the adult population. In some people, pill-swallowing difficulties may have emotional and psychological roots. Physical characteristics of solid dosage forms such as shapes, size, texture and taste may also trigger medication swallowing difficulties in some people. Pill-swallowing difficulties may eventually result in patients refraining from taking their medication. Up to 70% of community patients with medication swallowing difficulties and 20% of aged care residents reportedly skip medications because of their inability to swallow their medicines, which can lead to poor disease management and increase in morbidity and mortality.

Health care professionals have the difficult task of administering medications to patients with swallowing difficulties. In order to overcome the non-adherence and to make the medication easier to swallow, patients, caregivers, and/or health care professionals may resort to unauthorized methods of administration such as crushing/splitting tablets or opening capsules. 10-59% of community pharmacy customers self-reported modifying their medication before taking it.

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How can you apply:

Making modification to medication such as crushing or splitting for ease of swallowing difficulties have been associated with increased risk of medication misadventures, adverse drug reactions, and in some cases have fatal consequences.

Medications that are modified from their original form, this is considered off-label use as it will not fall under a product's original license.

Foods or drinks such as yogurt, jam, juices, and milk are used as an aid in which the whole pills can be hidden or crushed tablets or capsules contents are mixed to facilitate swallowing and improve palatability of the medication particles. Mixing medicines with food or drinks increases the possibility of food-drug interactions and can potential result in increased or decreased therapeutic effect by altering the bioavailability of the drug.

While understanding and resolving the underlying cause of medication swallowing problems is generally the preferred approach, sometimes this may not be possible.

*Phazix's has no known drug interactions and does not affect the absorption rate of the drug.