

How to Pill a Cat

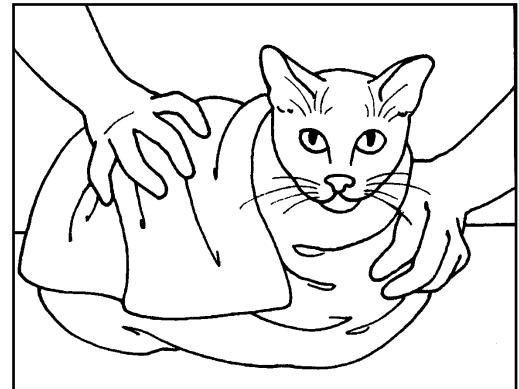
Before you follow the steps below, remember these tips: (1) If you're not in control, cats will sense this and do their best to make the entire process as difficult as they can. ("Calm, cool, and collected" is the motto to live by here.) (2) Cats aren't too fond of having their mouths pried open and pills dropped down them. They'll try their best to back away from you and flee. So a key part of the process is making sure cats are properly restrained. (3) Some cats learn to associate getting a pill with salivating (a "Pavlov's dog" reaction). To prevent messy drooling, you'll have to learn how to pill the cat quickly and efficiently.

Now the adventure begins. The steps below are guidelines only. Feel free to modify them according to the cat's, and your own, comfort level.

If you hide a pill in food, dogs will usually gobble it right down. Cats, however, rarely fall for this trick. Chances are, you'll need to give the cat his pill by hand.

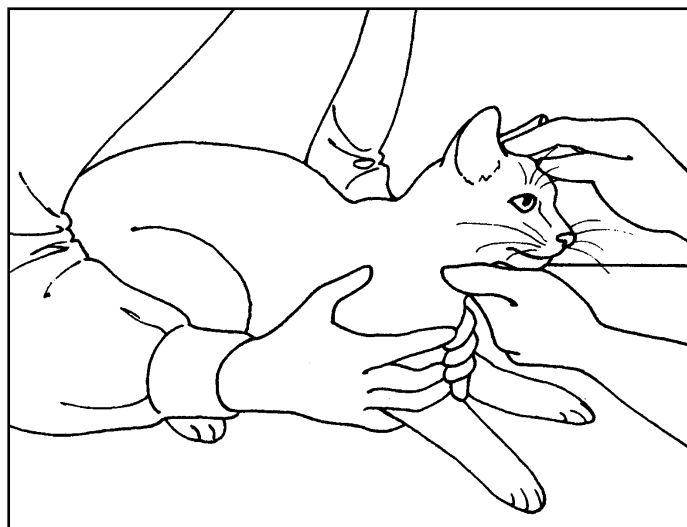
1: Sit Still, Kitty.

If you're pilling the cat by yourself, hold the cat so that he can't back away. A corner works well. Or kneel down, turn the cat so that he faces away from you, and cradle him gently between your knees so that you have both hands free. Then follow steps two through six.



If the cat is especially hard to restrain, try wrapping him up. Simply place the cat in a pillowcase or towel and wrap it completely around the cat's body, covering all four paws.

If someone is available to help you, have your helper comfort and cradle the cat from behind, holding the cat's front legs down securely so that he doesn't scratch. Once the cat is restrained, follow steps two through six.

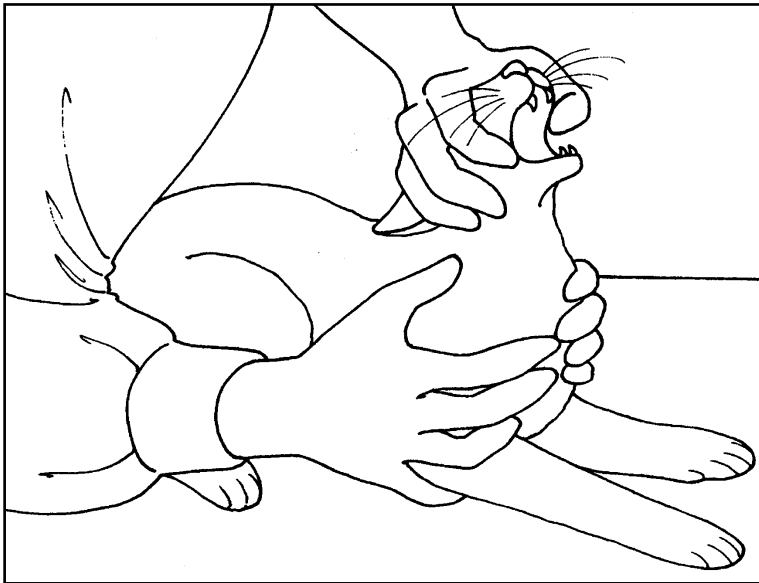


Illustrations by Susie Duckworth

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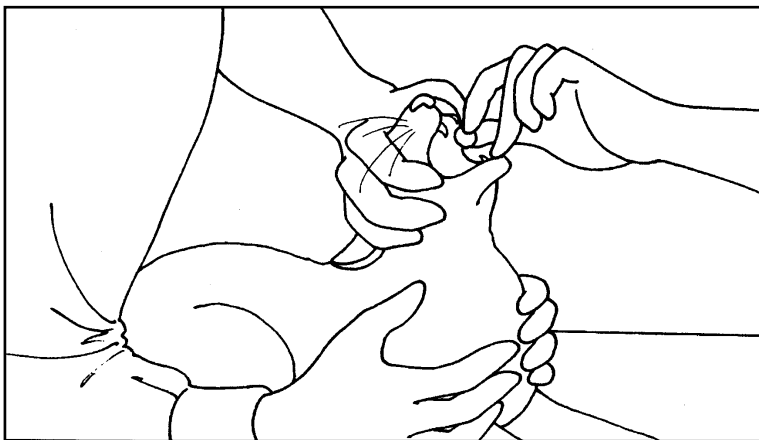


2: **Get a Grip.** Place one hand over the cat's head so that your thumb and forefinger are on the side ridges of his face just behind his jaw.



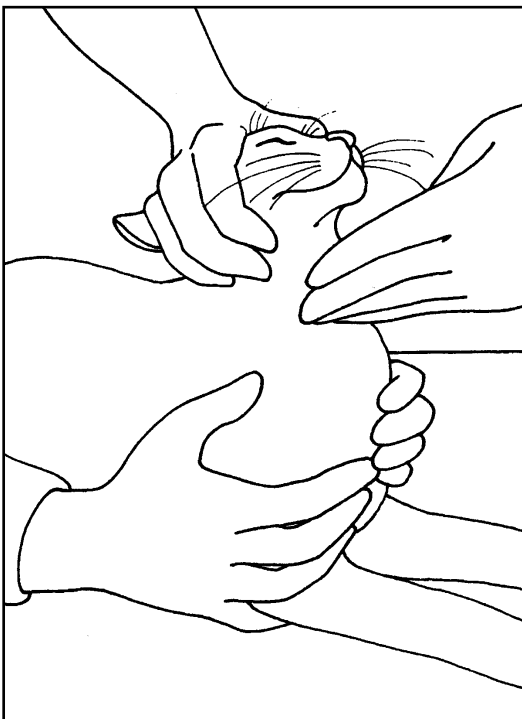
3: **Look Up, Boy.** Tilt the cat's head back until his nose points upward. The cat should reflexively open his mouth slightly.

4: **Open Wide.** Hold the pill between the thumb and forefinger of your other hand, and use your middle finger to gently open the cat's mouth fully.



5: **Down the Hatch.** Drop the pill as far back in the cat's throat as possible, aiming for the point where the tongue meets the roof of his mouth. If you're comfortable sticking your finger into the cat's mouth, use your finger to slide the pill down.

6: **Now Swallow.** Quickly close the cat's mouth, continuing to hold his head back. Stroke the cat's throat to stimulate swallowing. When the cat licks his nose, it often means he's swallowed the pill. If the cat doesn't swallow, try blowing lightly on his nose. This stimulates the cat's swallowing reflex and serves to distract him.



7: **Good Kitty.** After the cat swallows the pill, give him praise and maybe a treat. Make the pill-taking just a small part of an otherwise positive experience. By pampering the cat, you'll help him be more prepared and cooperative the next time he's given a pill—which will probably be the next day.

