

## Factsheet 6: Opening tretinoin capsules

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This factsheet provides information for patients or parents of children who have been prescribed tretinoin capsules.

Wherever possible, anti-cancer capsules should be swallowed whole with a glass of water.

However, some people (particularly children) cannot swallow whole capsules or they may have a feeding tube through which they also take medicines. This factsheet will guide you through how to open tretinoin capsules safely so the contents can be taken in a small amount of food or drink.

You should only open tretinoin capsules if you have been advised on how to do this safely by a healthcare professional. It is safe for people to handle the capsules if they are taking them as part of their treatment, however the capsules may produce side effects (including skin irritation) if handled by others.

This procedure is only suitable for tretinoin. Please note it is not suitable for all medicines.

### Remember

- The anti-cancer capsules should never be handled by anyone who is pregnant or planning a pregnancy.
- Use the oral anti-cancer pack provided.
- Store capsules in the container provided.
- Store the capsules in a secure place, away from and out of the sight of children.
- In case of a spillage while opening these capsules, see the advice in Table 1 below.

### Preparation

You will need a clean and clear working surface.

Try to ensure there are no interruptions (for example from pets or children).

Do not mix different medicines together. You will need to follow the appropriate procedure for each different type of medicine.

1. You will need to have ready the following items:
  - The anti-cancer capsule(s) needed for the dose
  - Two plastic medicine pots
  - Three oral/ enteral syringes
  - Small pair sharp clean scissors (to be used only for this purpose)
  - A small plastic tray
  - Kitchen roll (to be used only for this purpose)
  - Pair of non-sterile gloves
  - Mask
  - Plastic apron
  - Small amount of liquid  
(Suitable liquid: lukewarm milk, soya bean oil)
  - Small sealable plastic bag
  - Yellow clinical waste bag

2. Line a plastic tray with a piece of kitchen towel and place on a clean, clear working surface.
3. Fill two syringes with the liquid (see above) for flushing the tube.
4. Put on gloves, mask and apron.
5. Put the capsule(s) needed for the dose in a medicine pot.
6. Take a capsule between finger and thumb and hold firmly upright. With the scissors snip the tip off the capsule into the tray to avoid any possible harm to the eyes.
7. Carefully squeeze the contents of the capsule into the medicine pot.
8. Discard empty capsule into a small sealable bag.
9. Use a fresh piece of kitchen roll to wipe any drug from the gloves then dispose of kitchen roll immediately in the small sealable bag.
10. Repeat steps 6 to 9 for each capsule needed for the dose.
11. After all the required capsules have been emptied, add some liquid (see above) to the capsule contents in the medicine pot, mix together and draw up the mixture into the syringe.
12. If using a feeding tube, flush the feeding tube with the liquid (see above) using one of the syringes.
13. Give the prepared medicine to the patient either by mouth **or** down a feeding tube.
14. Rinse the medicine pot with the liquid to ensure the whole dose is given.
15. If using a feeding tube, flush the feeding tube with the liquid (see above) using the second syringe.
16. Place the medicine pots and kitchen roll into small sealable bag and seal before placing in the yellow waste bag.
17. Clean the work surface with damp kitchen roll. The medicine pots, scissors and syringes can be washed in warm soapy water, rinsed and dried before being re-used for this purpose.
18. Dispose of gloves, apron, mask and sealable bag in yellow clinical waste bag provided.
19. Seal and return yellow waste bag to the Royal Marsden when full.
20. Wash hands thoroughly.

**Table 1: Handling spillages**

Contact	Action
<b>Skin</b>	Immediately wash the affected area thoroughly with luke warm soapy water. Do not scrub as this may damage the skin. Contact your doctor for advice if you have any adverse effects.
<b>Eye</b>	Wash the eye with plenty of fresh water every few minutes for about 20 minutes. Contact your doctor for advice if you have any adverse effects.
<b>Work surface or floor</b>	Wearing protective clothing (gloves and apron) wipe up the spillage using paper towels. Wash the area with warm soapy water and dry with absorbent paper towel. Kitchen towel should be put in the special clinical waste bag.
<b>Clothing</b>	Wearing gloves, blot the area with kitchen towel, remove clothing and wash separately from other items. Wash any affected areas of your skin as described above. Kitchen towel should be put in the special clinical waste bag.