Teaching Your Child to Swallow Pills?
These tips can help.

Goal
Create an easy-to-read, easy-to-understand guide that empowers and supports parents and caregivers as they help their children learn to swallow pills.

Background
- Many children have difficulty swallowing pills, tablets, or capsules.
- The lack of appropriate materials, methods, and training mean that many children never properly learn this skill.
- Clinical research studies frequently begin before a child-friendly dose is available.
- Studies often require the participant to take the available dose form which is often a pill designed for the adult population.
- Not being able to swallow a pill is sometimes the only issue keeping a child from participating in a study. This means they could miss out on access to a potential new treatment option.

Methods
1. Literature review: A review of the research confirmed that some parents were indeed struggling to teach their children how to swallow pills. It also informed which pill-swallowing methods were most successful.
2. Development*: Health literacy principles were used for content development and information design. Using culturally diverse, kid-friendly images were a high priority.
3. Assessment*: Readability assessment was conducted using the CDC Clear Communication Index (CCI).
4. Testing*: Formal usability testing was conducted with 7 parents of children unable to swallow pills. Feedback was also collected from parent and pediatric advisory groups both inside and outside of the company.

Results

Example of participant feedback:
"It sounds almost like I wrote this... If I were to inform someone or educate them on how to swallow a pill, pretty much everything I read I would say... It had the feeling like maybe who wrote the brochure was a parent, so they’ve been through it before.

- Participant with a 12-year-old child"

Conclusions
- This novel brochure is already filling a much needed gap for pill swallowing training for children who may be candidates for pediatric clinical studies.
- Not being able to swallow pills doesn’t just impact kids participating in clinical studies --
- This educational brochure can also be useful in other settings beyond clinical research, including health care providers’ offices and pharmacies.
- Many adults also have difficulty swallowing pills. A version of this brochure adapted for adults would also be useful.