

Medicating Your Bird

It is crucial that medication be given as instructed by your avian veterinarian.

Keeping your pet healthy is everyone's goal. However if your bird becomes ill, effective treatment will require that medications are given at the right dose and frequency for the period of time indicated on the label. For instance, antimicrobial drugs like antibiotics and antifungal agents can actually make microorganisms stronger and resistant to drug therapy if the medicine is given for too short a time or in too small a quantity.

If you are having trouble giving your bird its medication, here are some tips to try.

- Restrain your bird properly to get the correct dose into your pet. This will allow you to give the medication slowly by mouth.
 1. Gently and slowly place a towel over your bird.
 2. Bring your hand around the back side of the head and gently but firmly grasp your bird around the jaw so that he bird cannot flip around or shake medication out of its mouth.
 3. Bring your bird up against your body, while keeping him upright. It is important to keep the wings against the body to keep the delicate bones within the wings safe.
 4. Gently but firmly extend the neck
 5. Slowly administer medication through the corner of the beak. Make sure your bird swallows as you slowly drip medication into the corner of the beak. Continue this process until all of the medication is taken.
- If you are unable to restrain your bird properly, several other tricks may be tried. Some birds will take their medication(s) on a favorite food. Or mix the medication with peanut butter or other nut butter (such as almond, pistachio butters) and spread the mixture on a cracker. Or try applying medication to a relatively hard “cookie” or cornbread. Short term, an item like pound cake may also be used.
- If your bird routinely eats Lafeber Nutri-Berries or Avi-Cakes, then Medi-Berries may be another option. Birds that are accustomed to seed and others may also accept Medi-Berries.



Medications may be applied to Medi-Berries and then offered for your bird to eat. Apply the medicine(s) on each berry as directed on the label. Let the Medi-Berries dry to regain their crunchy quality, then offer the medicated Berries first. Wait until your bird consumes these Berries before giving other foods.

Monitor your bird closely

Always monitor the number and quality of your pet's droppings. Are they the same as before the medication was started? Contact your avian veterinarian if a change is observed.

It is also a good idea to weigh your bird daily using a gram scale using a food scale for smaller species. A "birdie" gram scale or a perch for use on a "regular" gram scale may be purchased from some pet stores. Record your bird's daily weight and bring that information with you on your bird's next visit to the veterinarian. If your bird drops more than 10% of its weight, call your veterinarian right away.

Some birds figure out that there is medication on the food and do not eat as much or they stop eating altogether. It is important to decide if this represents a worsening of your bird's medical condition or just an dislike of the medicated food. If your bird's attitude and activity level appear normal, this drop in appetite most likely represents distaste for the medication, however always contact your avian veterinarian if there is a drop in appetite.

Prepare for a "rainy day"

As in people, it is a rare for most birds to be healthy for their entire life. Take measures right now to ensure your bird takes its medication with minimal stress.

- Towel training: Teach your bird to play peek-a-boo with a towel to desensitize him to being surrounded by a towel.
- Weigh your pet regularly.
- Train your bird to accept treats from a syringe or spoon.

See the client education hand-out on Training Basic Skills for more information.