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HEALTH & MEDICINE

HEALTH TREND REPORT:

Lollipops, lotions, lemon lozenges and lip balms. Eight new ways to take prescription medicine.



By: Bill Beckman, *RPh*

Popping a pill is often the easiest way to take medicine. However, it's not always the most effective or the safest. Oral medication can impact organs that are not even being treated, and sometimes the side effects are severe enough that taking the pills is impossible.

Fortunately, pills are just one of many dosage forms that medication can be made into. Here are some alternative ways medication can be taken and times when they may be appropriate.

1. Medicated Lotions and Gels

The skin is an excellent vehicle for delivering some medications. If you have arthritic knees or migraine headaches, it just makes sense to deliver the medication right at the source of the pain. Sometimes a combination of medications can be delivered in one easy-to-apply fast penetrating gel and pain relief is fast and sensitive internal organs are avoided.

Another medication that can be prescribed in a lotion form is natural, bio-identical hormones used for PMS and during menopause. Bio-identical hormones are fat-soluble and easily transport through the skin to be stored in fatty tissue. Since the body pulls only the hormones it needs out of "storage", patients can often lower their dosage without compromising how well they feel.

Children who have a difficult time taking oral medicine can often get a systemic dose of their medication as easily as applying sunscreen. "My son couldn't take pills, and if it looked or tasted like medicine, he would have no part of it," said one mom. "Custom Medicine put his medicine into a cream that I rub on his back and the results were fantastic. I couldn't believe he could get that much better without having to take a pill."

Topical medicine can also be applied to the nails. If you've ever had nail fungus, you know that treating it effectively can be difficult, and expensive. Most prescription topical nail fungal remedies have reported poor cure rates and require 6-12 months of use. The other standard is an oral medication, which is potentially dangerous to the liver. A new alternative is a compounded topical treatment that has superior nail penetration and is able to deliver an antifungal to the site of infection in less time and for less money than the commercially available prescriptions.

2. Lozenges

Lozenges, (or troches as they're referred to in pharmacy lingo), are a great alternative for patients who cannot swallow pills, or who need a medication that needs to get delivered in the mouth and throat. This is an ideal way to tackle thrush, persistent throat infections and even some pain medications. Lozenges can flavored to cover the bitter taste of many drugs, and pink lemonade, watermelon and mint chocolate are our current favorites.

3. Nasal Sprays

Sinus infections and migraines can be tough to treat. However, delivering the medication as a nasal sprays can provide a fast, direct, topical treatment in an easy to use spray bottle. Prescriptions compounded as a spray safely delivers the customized medication in the optimum dosage directly to the infection or site of pain while minimizing absorption into the blood stream.

4. Liquid Suspensions

Most medications can be made into a suspension, which can be extremely handy when trying to medicate kids and chronically ill patients. While commercial suspensions for kids primarily come in three flavors, we offer over 25 and even let the kids pick their flavor. Adults battling a chronic illness who are particularly sensitive to bitter or sweet flavors can more easily tolerate flavors that are sour or salty. Each patient is unique so we offer dozens of flavor options to suit every palette.

If you've ever tried to "pill" your pet, you'll come to love liquid suspensions too. Instead of bubble gum or cherry flavor, compounded vet medicine can be made into pet-friendly flavors like chicken, liver, and peanut butter for dogs and cats, and even tutti-frutti for birds.

5. Chewy Treats

Wouldn't it be nice to give kids a gummy treat that was actually good for them? Or reward your pets with a chicken flavored treat that had their medicine in it? We've had patients who've battled to medicate their animals for years until they found the medicated treats made it easy.

6. Lollipops

Lollipops aren't just for candy-loving kids. They're a great way to deliver medication. Imagine you have a wound inside your mouth and you need a healing agent and an anesthetic to dull the pain. A medicated lollipop would do the trick. They can also be made to help curb nicotine cravings, throat infections and deliver a variety of pain medications.

7. Medicated Sticks/Lip Balms

Like the creams, medicated sticks are designed to optimize penetration and absorption of the medication. The stiffness of this base allows the medicine to be dispensed in lip-balm or deodorant applicators for "spot" trigger point application. This is a great way to apply pain medication to a "trigger" point, tackle neuropathic pain associated with diabetes., or even swipe the wrist with anti-nausea medication during pregnancy or before a boating trip.

8. Slow Release Capsules

You thought I wasn't writing about pills, so why bring up capsules? We compound special capsules that solve a number of medication problems. For those suffering from an under active thyroid, many medications are effective but wear off during the day. Another way to take the proper medication is through a compounded slow-release capsule than releases medication a little at a time throughout the day. Natural hormones and pain medications can also be compounded as slow release so the effects last for 8 – 12 hours.

Fortunately, when a commercial medication isn't the right fit, and a different dosage form is needed, you should never have to compromise. A compounding pharmacist is trained to make the medicine fit the patient, instead of the patient being made to fit the medicine.

Bill Beckman, RPh is one of only 3,500 independent, community pharmacists nationwide who practices the art of pharmacy compounding that was the standard for hundreds of years. He owns Custom Medicine Pharmacenter with his wife Mary in Beverly, MA. As a registered pharmacist, he is a member of the Professional Compounding Centers of America. In addition to customizing topical pain relievers, the pharmacy specializes in pediatric medicine, discontinued product formulations, veterinary prescriptions, and bio-identical hormone replacement. Custom Medicine Pharmacenter, located at 25 Cabot Street in Beverly, is open Monday to Friday, 9:30 am - 5:30 pm and by appointment.

The pharmacy can be reached by calling 978-524-4800 or by emailing info@custommedicine.com.

Sometimes you need a pharmacist who actually uses one of these.



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