



# Playing with Your Medication

Ardent drug haters who have difficulty swallowing chunky tablets, behold! There is hope, as Hazel Lin discovers, at the Specialist Compounding Pharmacy, which offers creative solutions for specialized medication. Reasons for such fussiness include having to take medication which are unpalatable or are difficult to find due to limited demand.

With a wide range of flavours and dosage forms, customized compounding is suitable for those who do not like the original taste or form of their medicine, according to Head Pharmacist Thomas Khoo. A few active ingredients can also be combined into a single preparation, for more convenient dosing.

Some people do not respond well to commercial preparations which may contain preservatives such as alcohol, which can cause irritation, or sugar which makes the medication undesirable for prolonged use

in the mouth. He adds that it is also possible to concoct medications which do not contain dyes or lactose, thereby decreasing the risk of an allergic reaction for susceptible patients.

It's no child's play, with much care put into creating each product. Somewhat like cooking, there is a standardized sequence of ingredients to be added. An electric mortar and pestle is used, resulting in a 100% homogenous mix. In certain formulas, carefully-controlled heating is required, to enable the ingredient to be easily mixed into the base, while keeping the activity of the medicine. The pH of the medicine has to be maintained for stability as it will affect the absorption into the body.

The compounding pharmacy is unable to make injections and eye drops though, as the facilities are not sterile. Mr Khoo emphasizes the importance of using good ingredients (he imports his international pharmacopoeia-grade base ingredients from the US and Australia) and reveals that he has more than 4,500 pre-tested formulas at his disposal.

He lets me try a few caramel-flavoured placebos and explains the intriguing process of creating medicated lollipops. Starting with a sorbitol base, the active ingredient is added into the mix and a stick inserted into the mould. It is then put into the fridge to solidify before being wrapped in aluminium foil.

Interesting preparations he has made include a dental anti-fungal and steroid mouthwash, effervescent powder and preservative-

free antibiotic solutions for sensitive skin. Mr Khoo lists the astounding flavours available for animals. Dogs can choose from beef, cheese, liver or chicken, while horses prefer alfalfa, molasses or carrot. Talk about a vast selection.

Taking medicine may not be fun, but at least you can look forward to trying something that tastes better. Before you rush out to get a dose of your own medicine, remember to get a prescription from the doctor, as these are after all, still drugs, albeit in a different form, and require precise medical instructions before preparation and consumption.

## Here are some of the dosage forms available

- oral rinses
- suspensions
- lollipops
- lip balms
- gummy bears
- lozenges
- transdermal creams
- capsules
- suppositories



## Check out the range of flavours too!

- Peppermint
- Spearmint
- Lemon
- Lime
- Orange
- Apple
- Peach
- Tutti Frutti
- Raspberry
- Strawberry
- Blackberry
- Caramel
- Vanilla
- Vanilla Butternut
- Anise
- Chocolate
- Coffee

