

Crushing medications risks effectiveness

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Dr Esther Lau found most people who modified medication dosage forms didn't seek advice from healthcare professionals.

People who take more than four doses of medicine a day appear more likely to crush tablets or open capsules potentially reducing their effectiveness, QUT research has found.

Also most of those who modified medication dosage forms didn't seek advice from healthcare professionals, instead turning to family and friends.

The study, by researchers from QUT and the University of Queensland, was published in the *Journal of Pharmacy Practice and Research*.

Dr Esther Lau, one of the researchers from QUT's School of Clinical Sciences, said almost half (44.2 per cent) of the 369 respondents did not think there would be issues with crushing or modifying tablets or capsules.

"It is concerning that this many of the people surveyed did not seem aware of the potential dangers associated with modifying dosage forms," she said.

"Depending on the tablet or capsule, and the type of medicine, modifying the dosage forms can lead to reduced effectiveness of the medication, and increased risk of [adverse effects](#).

"The research found more than 14 per cent of people have trouble swallowing tablets or capsules, and some people modified their medication even when they had no trouble swallowing them."

Overall, one in ten people reported modifying medication dosage forms, regardless of how many doses they were taking.

"Many participants said they would not seek advice before modifying medication dosage forms, nor tell a health professional if they experienced difficulty swallowing," Dr Lau said.

"But what is equally concerning is that none of the participants were advised by a pharmacist on what to do to make it easier for them to swallow their [tablets](#), but past research has already identified that healthcare professionals are not asking patients often enough about swallowing difficulties.

"Health professionals need to be more assertive in providing consumer education, to ensure the general public is aware of the potential issues associated with swallowing difficulties and modifying medication dosage

forms.

"Pharmacists are the medication experts, and ideally a pharmacist should be involved in advising and providing suitable options for administering medications to patients at risk of swallowing difficulties. However, managing swallowing difficulties should take an interdisciplinary approach and [healthcare professionals](#) need to care for these patients as a team."

Dr Lau and colleague Dr Manuel Serrano Santos are working with a group of international experts to advocate for an interdisciplinary approach for caring for patients with, or at risk of, swallowing troubles.

More information: More information is available at:
www.medicinesdysphagiaresearch.com

"Prevalence of swallowing difficulties and medication modification in customers of community pharmacists." *Journal of Pharmacy Practice and Research*, 45: 18–23. doi: 10.1002/jppr.1052

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