

Ghosts of Tablets Passed

You might be surprised if you see a pill in your stool. Believe it or not, there's a name for these. They're called "ghost tablets." Ghost tablets can look just like a pill you have taken, or like a small soft mass. If you see a ghost tablet, there's no need to be scared, but you might have questions.

Why would I see a ghost tablet?

Some pills are broken down after you swallow them and as they travel through your gut. This is the way your gut handles most foods. However, **some pills are not broken down in your gut.** Similar to the way you can sometimes see corn or peanuts in your stool, these pills leave ghost tablets.

If I see a ghost tablet, does this mean the pill didn't work?

If you see a ghost tablet, it doesn't mean the pill didn't work. Think of ghost tablets like sponges that have been wrung out. The medicine has been "wrung out" of the pill by your body. But the ghost tablet, like a sponge, stays intact.

What types of pills leave ghost tablets?

Pills that leave ghost tablets are usually those that release the medicine slowly. These pills are often taken just one or two times a day. You might see letters like "XL" or "ER" as part of the names of these pills. Here are some examples of pills that leave ghost tablets:

- *Adalat CC* (U.S.)
- *Adalat XL* (Canada)
- *Allegra-D*
- *Aplenzin* (U.S.)
- *Asacol*
- *Asacol HD* (U.S.)
- *Cardura XL* (U.S.)
- *Concerta*
- *Ditropan XL*
- *Dynacirc CR* (U.S.)
- *Exalgo* (U.S.)
- *Fortamet* (U.S.)
- *Glucophage XR* (U.S.)
- *Glucotrol XL* (U.S.)
- *Glumetza*
- *Invega*
- *Jurnista* (Canada)
- *K-Tab* (U.S.)
- *Klor-Con* (U.S.)
- *Lialda* (U.S.)
- *Lopresor SR* (Canada)
- *OxyContin* (U.S.)
- *Pristiq*
- *Procardia XL* (U.S.)
- *Rayos* (U.S.)
- *Sudafed 24 Hour* (U.S.)
- *Tegretol XR* (U.S.)
- *Urocit-K*
- *Venlafaxine Extended Release* (U.S.)
- *Viramune XR*
- *Wellbutrin XL*

If you take a generic form of any of these pills, it's possible you will see a ghost tablet as well.

Should I tell a health care provider if I see a ghost tablet?

Ghost tablets are normal when you take pills such as those listed above. However, if you have blood in the stool or severe stomach pain at any time, contact your health care provider.

[February 2013]