



FIGURE 9-4: Scored tablets. Tablets are marked to allow for easy splitting.

Procedure Box 9-1 Administration of Solid Medications

- Observe the seven “rights” of medication administration.
- Read the medication order, and compare it with the medication container.
- Wash hands.
- Compare the medication order with the container a second time. Check the expiration date.
- Assemble equipment needed: medication, medication cup, order, and cup of water to help swallow medication.
- Identify the patient, and explain what you will be doing.
- Compare the order and container a third time.
- Without touching the medication, gently tap the correct amount into the cap of the container.
- If the medication is scored and must be cut, place it (without touching it) into a pill-splitting device, and cut correctly.
- Place solid medication in a medicine cup.
- Give the medication to the patient with a glass of water.
- Instruct the patient to swallow the medication completely. (Never leave until you witness the patient taking medication.)
- Assess the patient for any negative response (e.g., choking).
- Wash hands.
- Document medication administration and the patient’s response.

Example:

11/15/2012 8:15 a.m.: 500 mg ampicillin given PO. No problems noted. CJ Watkins RN, MSN

Oral Liquid Medications and Administration

At times, solid medication is not the best option for oral medication administration. Patients may have difficulty swallowing solid medication, or the medication needs to start working sooner than the solid form allows. Liquid medications are easier to swallow and are more quickly absorbed than are solid forms, and they are available in a variety of compositions (Fig. 9-5). For instance, effervescent salts are granules or coarse powders containing one or more medicinal agents, as well as tartaric acid or sodium bicarbonate. When dissolved in water or other liquids, effervescent salts produce carbonation. An example is Alka-Seltzer, which is a medication used for heartburn. The advantage of taking it in effervescent salt form is that the medication is already dissolved and does not have to wait for the stomach to dissolve it before the medication begins to work. Disadvantages of this form are the same as those of most other medications. Because of possible allergy to inactive ingredients, patients must read the ingredient list carefully before using this form of liquid medication.

Another form of liquid medication is an elixir, named because it contains alcohol (ETOH) in the preparation. The alcohol helps to dissolve the medication and makes it more palatable. Dimetapp Elixir used for cold symptoms is an example. Elixirs must be kept tightly capped to prevent evaporation of the alcohol because this would change the concentration of the medication in the elixir, and dosing