Quick Guide to COVID-19 Treatments

If you tested positive for COVID-19 and are an older adult age 65 and older, have a weakened immune system, or have a chronic medical condition, you could be at high risk for getting severely ill from COVID-19. People who are at higher risk for serious COVID-19 illness may be eligible for one of several potentially lifesaving COVID-19 treatments. Early intervention with COVID-19 therapeutics can reduce the risk of disease progression and help prevent serious outcomes, including hospitalization and death.

All COVID-19 treatments require a prescription, so the first step after a positive COVID-19 test is to contact a qualified healthcare provider to discuss your treatment options based on risk factors including age, medical history and current medications, and how long you’ve had symptoms. Time is of the essence, as most of these treatments must be administered very quickly after symptom onset.

Here is a quick guide to understanding the available COVID-19 treatments, eligibility for treatments, timing of treatments, and how to access the treatments.

Antiviral Medications

If you are at high risk for serious COVID-19 illness and you have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past five days, you may qualify for prescription oral antiviral pills. Antiviral medications are available to treat several diseases, such as influenza. Antiviral medications can help your body fight COVID-19 by stopping the virus from multiplying in your cells, which could minimize symptoms and shorten the duration of the illness. This could lower the chances of your illness getting worse and requiring hospitalization.

Two oral antiviral pills are available to treat COVID-19, both available under emergency use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- **Paxlovid** (Pfizer) – Eligible individuals must be age 12 or older who weigh at least 88 pounds, test positive for COVID-19, and be at high risk for progression to severe illness from COVID-19.
  - Prescription required, and should be initiated as soon as possible after diagnosis of COVID-19 — no later than five days after symptom onset.
  - Paxlovid is not recommended for those with severe kidney disease or who are on dialysis, or those with severe liver disease. Dose adjustments may be required for patients with mild to moderate kidney disease. Healthcare providers should also monitor for possible drug-to-drug interactions and prescribe alternative treatments as needed or make temporary adjustments to other medications during COVID-19 treatment. Please review the Paxlovid FDA EUA Fact Sheet for a list of warnings and precautions.

- **Molnupiravir** (Lagevrio) – Eligible individuals must be age 18 or older, test positive for COVID-19, and be at high risk for progression to severe illness from COVID-19.
  - Prescription required, and should be initiated as soon as possible after diagnosis of COVID-19 — no later than five days after symptom onset.
  - Molnupiravir is not recommended for individuals who are pregnant. Breastfeeding is not recommended during treatment and for four days after the last dose. Please review the Molnupiravir FDA EUA Fact Sheet for a list of warnings and precautions.

An antiviral treatment administered through intravenous infusion is also available under full FDA approval for adult and pediatric patients (28 days of age and older and weighing at least 6.6 pounds) through hospitals or outpatient treatment locations:

- **Remdesivir** or Veklury (Gilead Sciences) – Eligible adults and children must test positive for COVID-19, and be at high risk for progression to severe illness from COVID-19.
  - Remdesivir was originally approved by the FDA for treating patients hospitalized with COVID-19 and its use was expanded for people who are not hospitalized, but are at high risk for disease progression.
Non-hospitalized patients: Can be used for treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in high-risk patients with a three-day course started within seven days of symptom onset.

Hospitalized patients: Patients in the hospital with COVID-19 typically receive a five-day course.

Prescription required.

This is the only available treatment for children younger than age 12 who are at high risk for serious COVID-19 illness.

People who believe they might be eligible for one of these treatments should consult with a qualified provider to discuss medical history and current medications to check for possible drug-to-drug interactions, and determine the best course of treatment.

Monoclonal Antibodies

Your body naturally makes antibodies to fight infection. But your body might not have antibodies designed to recognize a new virus like the one that causes COVID-19. Monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) are molecules made in a laboratory to fight a specific infection. They can mimic the immune system's attack on cells, and give your body the antibodies it needs to protect itself. A mAb treatment could limit the amount of virus in your body, meaning you may have milder symptoms and be less likely to need hospital treatment. These treatments are given by intravenous infusion through an outpatient healthcare facility.

The availability and supply of certain COVID-19 therapies can change frequently based on effectiveness against particular variants or subvariants of COVID-19. Currently, one mAb is available for treatment of COVID-19 under emergency use authorization from the FDA:

- **Bebtelovimab** (Eli Lilly and Company) – Eligible individuals must be age 12 or older who weigh at least 88 pounds, test positive for COVID-19, and be at high risk for progression to severe illness from COVID-19.
  
  o This mAb is the only one effective against the Omicron subvariant BA.2, currently the dominant strain of the virus, for treatment of a positive COVID-19 patient.
  
  o Prescription required, and should be initiated as soon as possible after diagnosis of COVID-19 — no later than seven days after symptom onset.
  
  o Bebtelovimab is administered through a single IV infusion lasting approximately 30 seconds.
  
  o Please review the [Bebtelovimab FDA EUA Fact Sheet](https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-response-epreparedness/medical-countermeasures-activities/monoclonal-antibodies-benefit-risk) for a list of warnings and precautions.

People who believe they might be eligible for a mAb treatment should consult with a qualified provider to discuss medical history and determine the best course of treatment.

COVID-19 Prevention

COVID-19 therapeutics are not meant to be a substitute for vaccination. The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and offer the best ongoing protection against serious illness from COVID-19.

In some cases, people may not develop a sufficient immune response after COVID-19 vaccination because of a weakened immune system. In other cases, people are unable to receive a COVID-19 vaccination because of a severe reaction to the vaccine or its ingredients. A prescription preventative medication that can be given to offer protection for high-risk individuals is available under FDA emergency use authorization.

- **Evusheld** (AstraZeneca) – Eligible individuals must be age 12 or older who weigh at least 88 pounds and have certain immunocompromised conditions that increase their risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
  
  o Evusheld is not a treatment for COVID-19. It is a pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) monoclonal antibody treatment that is given as a preventative medication to those who have significant immune disorders or for the few people who have experienced a severe reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine and are unable to receive additional vaccinations.
  
  o Prescription required.
  
  o Evusheld consists of two monoclonal antibodies provided together to help prevent infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. Evusheld is administered during one visit with two separate intramuscular injections given one after the other.
  
  o Evusheld should not be given to anyone currently infected with COVID-19 or exposed to someone with COVID-19.
Please review the Evusheld FDA EUA Fact Sheet for a list of warnings and precautions.

People who believe they might be eligible for Evusheld should consult with a qualified provider to discuss medical history and determine the best ways to stay protected against COVID-19.

How to Access COVID-19 Treatments

Not everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 will need treatment. Most people experience mild-to-moderate symptoms and can recover at home under isolation with rest and over-the-counter fever-reducing medications as needed.

People who are age 65 or older, have a weakened immune system, or have certain medical conditions may benefit from therapies because they are at increased risk of developing serious illness.

Medications to treat COVID-19 must be prescribed by a healthcare provider and started as soon as possible after diagnosis to be effective. COVID-19 treatments are available statewide through hospitals and health systems, retail pharmacies, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and long-term care pharmacies. If you tested positive and are in a high-risk category, contact a healthcare provider right away to determine if you are eligible for treatment, even if your symptoms are mild right now. Treatment must be started within days after developing symptoms to be effective.

- **Test to Treat locations:** There are now locations where patients can get tested, have a medical visit, and, if eligible, receive treatment. The national Test to Treat initiative includes one-stop sites that have healthcare providers available to provide timely and thorough assessment, discuss relevant oral antiviral treatment options, and connect you with those treatments quickly.
  - Use the Test To Treat (hhs.gov) locations website to search for Ohio locations near you, or call 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489).
  - Note: If a person tests positive at a different location or with an at-home test, that person can still go to a Test to Treat location to receive a prescription from a qualified healthcare provider and treatment on the spot if eligible.
  - Some Test to Treat sites may have telehealth options available.

- **Your healthcare provider:** If you have tested positive for COVID-19 and would prefer to consult with your regular healthcare provider, your provider can recommend a treatment plan, and write a prescription or help connect you with a local provider offering the treatment you need if your provider does not have direct access to that treatment.

- Appointments are required at most healthcare locations, so those seeking care are advised to schedule an appointment online or by phone immediately. Those seeking treatment at a Test to Treat location are advised to call ahead to ensure treatments are still available, as supply of many COVID-19 treatments is limited.

Created May 17, 2022.

For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.