

## Outpatient Treatment for COVID-19

Several antiviral medications are available for treatment of nonhospitalized patients with COVID-19.

### Who Is Eligible for Outpatient COVID-19 Medications?

Individuals who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 and have COVID-19 symptoms are eligible for outpatient COVID-19 medications if they are at high risk of developing severe disease. This includes people aged 65 years or older and those aged 12 years or older with certain medical conditions (such as chronic lung or heart disease, diabetes, obesity, or a weakened immune system).

### Nirmatrelvir-Ritonavir (Paxlovid)

Nirmatrelvir-ritonavir has US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for people aged 18 years or older and is available under Emergency Use Authorization for individuals aged 12 to 17 years who weigh at least 40 kg. Nirmatrelvir-ritonavir is taken orally, twice daily for 5 days, and should be started within 5 days of onset of COVID-19 symptoms. The most common side effects of nirmatrelvir-ritonavir are altered taste, nausea, diarrhea, and dizziness.

Nirmatrelvir-ritonavir should not be prescribed to people with severe kidney or liver disease, and it should not be taken with certain drugs (such as amiodarone, statins, certain antiseizure medications, and certain immunosuppressants). Doctors may temporarily stop, replace, or decrease the dose of medications that interact with nirmatrelvir-ritonavir.

Some patients experience a return of COVID-19 symptoms after completing a 5-day course of nirmatrelvir-ritonavir. This symptom "rebound" is not associated with an increased risk of developing severe disease and does not need to be treated with another course of nirmatrelvir-ritonavir.

### Remdesivir (Veklury)

Remdesivir has FDA approval for treatment of COVID-19 in people aged 28 days or older who weigh at least 3 kg. For outpatients, remdesivir is given intravenously daily for 3 days and should be started within 7 days of COVID-19 symptoms. Because intravenous infusion is required, remdesivir is reserved for patients who are ineligible for treatment with nirmatrelvir-ritonavir. Remdesivir commonly causes nausea and diarrhea and, rarely, causes allergic reactions and elevations in liver function tests.

### Molnupiravir (Lagevrio)

Molnupiravir is the least effective outpatient medication for COVID-19, so it should be given only to patients who are not eligible for treatment with nirmatrelvir-ritonavir or remdesivir. Molnupiravir is not authorized for patients younger than 18 years or for individuals who are pregnant or attempting to become pregnant.

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### Outpatient medications for treatment of COVID-19

- ✓ Nirmatrelvir-ritonavir (Paxlovid)
- ✓ Remdesivir (Veklury)
- ✓ Molnupiravir (Lagevrio)

Individuals at high risk of severe disease who have COVID-19 symptoms and a positive SARS-CoV-2 test are eligible for outpatient treatment.

#### Who is at high risk for severe COVID-19?

- People aged 65 years or older
- People with certain medical conditions such as chronic lung or heart disease, diabetes, obesity, or a weakened immune system

#### How effective is outpatient COVID-19 treatment?

- Most patients improve several days to 2 weeks after starting medication.
- Medications work best when taken early in the course of COVID-19.
- Risk of hospitalization is substantially reduced with nirmatrelvir-ritonavir and remdesivir.

Patients who develop shortness of breath or other concerning symptoms after starting medication for COVID-19 should seek immediate medical care.

### How Effective Are Outpatient Treatments for COVID-19?

Nirmatrelvir-ritonavir and remdesivir substantially decrease risk of hospitalization and work best when taken early in the course of COVID-19. Most patients improve several days to 2 weeks after starting these medications, but those who develop shortness of breath or other concerning symptoms should seek immediate medical care. Patients with weakened immune systems who have prolonged COVID-19 symptoms and persistently positive SARS-CoV-2 test results may benefit from longer courses of nirmatrelvir-ritonavir or remdesivir.

### How Can Patients Get Medications for COVID-19?

People who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 and are at increased risk of severe illness should contact their doctor to find out if they are eligible for treatment. To avoid spreading SARS-CoV-2, patients should arrange for home delivery or use drive-through windows to pick up oral antiviral medications for COVID-19.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Department of Health and Human Services

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