

COVID-19 Therapeutics:

Toolkit for Communicating Public Health Recommendations



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How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit contains resources and recommendations for local and tribal health departments (LTHDs) and health care systems. Use this toolkit to communicate about the availability and effectiveness of the medications used to treat COVID-19.

Background

Most people who get COVID-19 have mild illness and can get better at home. A combination of rest, hydration, and over-the-counter medications can help relieve symptoms. But some people with severe illness may need medical care and treatment to get better. There are medications authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for those who are at risk of severe COVID-19. The federal government gives these medications to states for distribution. The state distributes these medications to retail pharmacies, health systems, community health clinics, and Test to Treat sites. Then a clinician with prescribing authority can prescribe the medications to people with COVID-19.

There is one type of prescription medication still authorized to treat COVID-19. **Oral antivirals** are pills you can take at home after you test positive for COVID-19, for those at risk of severe COVID-19. They help your body fight off the virus and reduce serious symptoms that can lead to hospitalization and death. You need to take oral antiviral treatments within five days of your symptoms starting. It is important that people at risk for severe COVID-19 who develop symptoms do not delay getting this treatment. They should test and seek treatment right away.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Here are answers to frequently asked questions on COVID-19 therapeutics. Use these to help answer questions about COVID-19 therapeutics or to create your own materials. This information is current as of the date of this toolkit’s publication.

Question	Answer
What COVID-19 treatments are available in Wisconsin?	<p>There are currently three treatments that are either FDA-approved or have emergency use authorizations (EUA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paxlovid (generic name: nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir) and Lagevrio (generic name: molnupiravir) are two different kinds of oral antiviral medications. • Veklury (generic name: remdesivir) is another antiviral medication given as an intravenous (IV) infusion at a clinic or hospital.
Who can get these treatments?	<p>These medications are for people who are at high risk of developing severe COVID-19. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you need a prescription from a clinician with prescribing authority to get most of these medications. Paxlovid can also be prescribed by pharmacists. A clinician will check your health and any risk factors (including age, other health conditions, and other medications you may be taking) to make sure these medications are right for you.</p>
Who is at high risk of severe COVID-19?	<p>Some conditions can put people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This includes but is not restricted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults 50 years or older. This risk increases based on age. • People who are unvaccinated. • People with certain medical conditions, such as weakened immune systems. Many common medical conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity can put you at higher risk for severe illness. The CDC keeps a more complete list of risk factors. • People who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, such as Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other communities of color and others who have barriers to accessing quality health care, housing, transportation, and job opportunities. <p>A clinician with prescribing authority will determine if your health makes you high risk and if you need a prescription for treatment.</p>
How can I get these treatments?	<p>Most of these treatments need a prescription from a clinician with prescribing authority. Paxlovid can be prescribed by a doctor, nurse practitioner, physician’s assistant, or pharmacist.</p> <p>If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and you are at risk of severe COVID-19, contact a clinician with prescribing authority to see if any of these medications may be right for you. For free, confidential help</p>

	<p>finding a health care provider near you, dial 211, or use the DHS free COVID-19 treatment telehealth service.</p> <p>If one of the oral antiviral pills is right for you, you will get a prescription to fill at a pharmacy. Be sure to call ahead to see if a pharmacy near you has the medications. You can also check the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' (DHS) COVID-19 therapeutics locator map. If you were tested at one of Wisconsin's Test to Treat locations, the on-site clinician or pharmacist can determine if you need a prescription, and the pharmacy can fill it right away.</p> <p>If a doctor recommends other treatments, such as Veklury or convalescent plasma, you will receive this in a clinic or hospital.</p>
<p>Where can I fill a prescription for these treatments?</p>	<p>Pharmacies across the state decide which medications they keep in stock. Any of the participating pharmacies or Test to Treat sites listed on the online map will have oral antiviral medications. To access other treatments, you will need a clinician with prescribing authority to arrange treatment in a clinic or hospital.</p>
<p>Are there medications that prevent COVID-19?</p>	<p>The best way to prevent COVID-19 is by staying up to date on your vaccines.</p>
<p>Are these medications FDA approved?</p>	<p>The FDA approves a medication when testing and research proves the drug is effective for its intended use, and that the benefits of the drug outweigh its risks. Veklury has FDA approval.</p> <p>An emergency use authorization (EUA) is a way to make vaccines, tests, and medicines available quickly during public health emergencies. A medication is authorized under an EUA during an emergency after the FDA has evaluated the research on it. Paxlovid and Lagevrio have FDA EUA.</p>
<p>How effective are these treatments?</p>	<p>In clinical trials, the treatments reduced rates of hospitalization and death due to COVID-19.</p> <p>Paxlovid is the preferred medication for treatment of COVID-19. Lagevrio can be used if Paxlovid is not available or appropriate.</p>
<p>What is Paxlovid rebound?</p>	<p>Some people who were treated with Paxlovid become symptomatic or test positive after previously testing negative. This is called a rebound illness. It can happen approximately 2-8 days after recovery.</p> <p>People who have become ill again have had mild illness. There are no reports of serious illness.</p> <p>In a clinical study, the number of people treated with Paxlovid who had a rebound COVID-19 illness was very small (0.8-2% of patients).</p>



	This is about the same number of people who were not treated with Paxlovid who got rebound COVID-19.
How are the drugs administered?	Paxlovid and Lagevrio are pills you can take at home. Veklury is given to you by intravenous (IV) infusion at a clinic or hospital.
What is Test to Treat?	<p>The federal government launched a program called Test to Treat. Test to Treat pharmacies and health centers provide COVID-19 testing and can fill the prescription for COVID-19 medications if you need them.</p> <p>There are currently 20 Test to Treat sites in the state. But there are over 700 pharmacies where you can get a prescription for oral antivirals filled. The current list of Test to Treat locations is updated as new locations sign up.</p>
How much do these medications cost?	<p>The federal government is currently providing these treatments for free, except for Veklury. The medicine itself will not cost you or your insurance anything. But you may have to pay other charges (such as the cost for an appointment with a clinician with prescribing authority) or have it paid by your insurance. For help finding a low-cost or free medical appointment near you, dial 211 or use the free DHS COVID-19 treatment telehealth service.</p> <p>Check with a health care clinic to learn about any costs, or whether your insurance will be billed for Veklury.</p>
What if I don't have insurance? Can I get treatments without insurance?	<p>To get treatments, you need to do three things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have symptoms of COVID-19. 2. Talk to a clinician with prescribing authority to learn if you should take the medication. If so, they will write a prescription for you. 3. Fill the prescription at a pharmacy that carries the oral medication. <p>You can get a free COVID-19 test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a local community testing site. . You may need an appointment at some locations. • Online by ordering self-tests at COVIDTests.gov or with Say Yes! COVID Test. <p>In order to make medical appointments accessible to all Wisconsinites ages 18 and older who might be eligible for COVID-19 treatment, DHS</p>



	<p>has launched a free Covid-19 treatment telehealth prescribing service for COVID-19 antiviral pills. Insurance is not required.</p> <p>If you don't have insurance or a regular health care clinic, you can also find free or low-cost care at community health centers.</p> <p>For help finding a low-cost or free medical appointment near you, dial 211.</p> <p>Antiviral pills are free of charge at participating pharmacies in Wisconsin.</p>
<p>Can people bring a self-test to a Test to Treat location to get treatment?</p>	<p>Yes. Self-tests tests are accepted at Test to Treat sites. But you no longer need to test positive in order to receive treatment. Other pharmacies who fill prescriptions for COVID-19 treatments may have their own policies.</p>



Talking Points

The following talking points can be used by LTHDs, health systems, and community health organizations to communicate about COVID-19 medications with the public.

- **If you have symptoms of COVID-19, life-saving, effective treatments are available that can reduce your chances of hospitalization and death.**
 - These treatments have been authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and are proven to reduce the severity of symptoms and reduce the risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19.
 - They are recommended for people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19, including older adults, people who are unvaccinated, and people with certain medical conditions, including a weakened immune system.
 - Oral antiviral medications are pills you can take at home. Today, two oral antiviral medications called Paxlovid and Lagevrio are authorized.
- **These treatments are widely available across Wisconsin.**
 - Treatments are available by prescription at retail pharmacies, federally qualified health centers, and other health clinic locations. Find where they are available on [DHS' website](#).
 - The cost for treatments may vary. The medications are available at no charge, however you may be charged for a clinic visit to receive a prescription.
 - In order to make medical appointments accessible to all Wisconsinites ages 18 and older who might be eligible for COVID-19 treatment, DHS has launched a free [Covid-19 treatment telehealth](#) prescribing service for COVID-19 antiviral pills. Insurance is not required.
 - If you don't have health insurance or a primary care doctor to get a prescription, you also can access health care through a [community health center](#). For free, confidential support finding health care and community resources near you, dial 211 or 877-947-2211, or text your ZIP code to 898-211. Find resources online at [211Wisconsin.org](#).
- **Do not delay: COVID-19 treatments must be started shortly after your symptoms begin.**
 - Paxlovid and Lagevrio must be started within five days of symptom onset.
 - If you have symptoms of COVID-19, seek a prescription for treatment right away. If you feel ill or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, use an at-home test, or visit a community testing site.
- **COVID-19 treatments are not a substitute for COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters.**
 - Vaccination and booster continue to provide the best protection against getting sick and experiencing serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.
 - The best way to protect yourself, your family and friends, and community from COVID-19 is to:
 - Know the COVID-19 Community Level where you live or are traveling to and follow associated guidelines.
 - Stay up to date on all COVID-19 vaccines and booster doses.
 - Get tested if you experience symptoms or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Stay home if you are sick and contact a doctor or clinic to see if you are eligible for COVID-19 treatments.



Sample News Release

This template is for LTHDs, health systems, and community health organizations. Use it to provide an overview of available treatments to the media. Note: This information is current as of the date of this toolkit's publication.

COVID-19 Treatments Available Throughout (Our Region/Our Health System)

Over [xx] pharmacies in [XX area] can fill oral COVID-19 antiviral prescriptions

Medications to treat COVID-19 are [widely] available across [our county/health system]. Wisconsinites who have symptoms of COVID-19 are urged to contact a health care provider to see if COVID-19 treatments are right for them.

“These effective treatments are critically important tools to fight COVID-19 for people who are at high risk for severe illness. If a clinician recommends COVID-19 treatment, follow their advice and take the medication. It could save your life,” said [insert spokesperson]. “But please remember, these treatments do not replace the need to stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccines and boosters are the most effective way to prevent severe illness and hospitalization if you get COVID-19.”

In December 2021, two oral antiviral medications received emergency use authorization (EUA) from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19. The medications, Paxlovid and Lagevrio (molnupiravir), are proven to reduce hospitalizations and deaths for patients.

You must have a prescription from a clinician with prescribing authority or designated [Test to Treat](#) site to get these treatments. Paxlovid can also be prescribed by pharmacists. Paxlovid (for people aged 12 and older) and Lagevrio (for people aged 18 and older) are recommended for people with mild to moderate COVID-19 illness who:

- Have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Are at [high risk for severe COVID-19 illness](#), hospitalization, or death.
- Can start treatment within five days of symptoms starting.

You can get oral antivirals with a prescription at retail pharmacies across the [county/health system], including [insert relevant locations}. In order to make medical appointments accessible to all Wisconsinites ages 18 and older who might be eligible for COVID-19 treatment, DHS has launched a free [Covid-19 treatment telehealth](#) prescribing service for COVID-19 antiviral pills. Insurance is not required.



To find these medications at a pharmacy or Test to Treat site, view the treatments locator map.



Suggested Newsletter or Blog Message

This template is for LTHDs, health systems, and community health organizations. Use it to provide an overview of available treatments in email and website communications with stakeholders. Note: This information is current as of the date of this toolkit's publication.

COVID-19 Therapeutics: What You Need to Know

Medications for the treatment of COVID-19 are available across [insert jurisdiction/service area]. Wisconsinites aged 12 and older who have symptoms of COVID-19 are encouraged to contact their regular health care provider or a community health center or pharmacy near them to see if COVID-19 treatments are right for them. The authorized medications, called oral antivirals, are recommended for people who:

- Have mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19.
- Are at [high risk for severe COVID-19 illness](#), hospitalization, or death.
- Can start treatment within five days of symptoms starting.

Those who qualify must have a prescription for the medications. Paxlovid can also be prescribed by pharmacists. Prescriptions can be filled at retail pharmacies across [insert location]. To find locations near you, see the [treatments locator map](#).

In order to make medical appointments accessible to all Wisconsinites ages 18 and older who might be eligible for COVID-19 treatment, DHS has launched a free [Covid-19 treatment telehealth](#) prescribing service for COVID-19 antiviral pills. Insurance is not required.

Remember, these treatments do not replace the need to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccines and boosters are the most effective way to prevent severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19.

Social Media Messages

Share these posts and their captions on your social media. Note: This information is current as of the date of this toolkit's publication.

Links to high-resolution social graphics and translations can be found on the [PCA portal](#) and on the [DHS COVID-19 Resources page](#).

 <p>The graphic features a blue background with a white and orange text box at the top that reads "DON'T DELAY TEST AND TREAT RIGHT AWAY". Below the text is an illustration of an elderly man with glasses, looking unwell with his hand to his face. To the left of the man are icons of a syringe and a virus. At the bottom left is the Wisconsin Department of Health Services logo, and at the bottom right is the text "LTHD Logo Here".</p>	<p>People 50 and older with underlying health conditions are more likely to get severely sick from COVID-19. Fortunately, medicines are available to treat people at higher risk for hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Learn more about how to get COVID-19 medicines at https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/treatments.htm</p>
 <p>The graphic features a blue background with a white and orange text box at the top that reads "DON'T DELAY TEST AND TREAT RIGHT AWAY". Below the text is an illustration of a woman with dark hair, sneezing into a white tissue. To the left of the woman are icons of a syringe and a virus. At the bottom left is the text "LTHD Logo Here", and at the bottom right is the Wisconsin Department of Health Services logo.</p>	<p>If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and are at high risk, you may be able to get lifesaving medications. Stay home and get tested as soon as possible! Visit www.covid-19-test-to-treat-locator-dhhs.hub.arcgis.com to find them at a pharmacy or Test to Treat site near you.</p>

DON'T DELAY

TEST AND TREAT RIGHT AWAY



LTHD Logo Here



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#DYK? Treatments and medications are available for people who have symptoms of COVID-19. If you are more likely to get seriously ill from COVID-19, talk to a health care provider to see if a COVID-19 medication may be right for you! If you need help finding a low-cost or free health care clinic, call 2-1-1. For more information on COVID-19 treatments visit:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/treatments.htm>

COVID-19 Treatments

Available for **high risk** Wisconsinites who have symptoms of COVID-19



While most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home, some people need medical care and treatment. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and are concerned about severe illness, contact a clinician who can prescribe COVID-19 treatments. Dial 211 if you need help finding one.

YOU STOP THE SPREAD



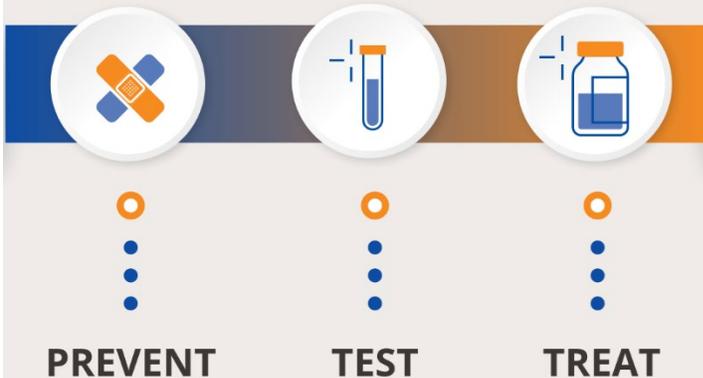
Prevent. Test. Treat.

- **Prevent:** Stay up to date on all COVID-19 vaccines and booster doses.
- **Test:** If you have symptoms or were exposed to COVID-19, get tested. Stay home if you are sick.
- **Treat:** Have symptoms of COVID-19? Contact a doctor right away to find out if you should receive COVID-19 antiviral treatments.



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Avoid Severe Illness and Death from COVID-19



 YOU STOP THE SPREAD

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Keep your family safe against COVID-19.

- Know your COVID-19 Community Level guidelines
- Keep everyone up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines
- Get tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms or were exposed
- Stay home if you are sick or test positive for COVID-19 and seek treatment



YOU STOP THE SPREAD

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