



COVID-19 Treatments

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About COVID-19 Treatments

What are COVID-19 treatments?

- COVID-19 treatments are medications that can stop COVID-19 illness from getting serious and prevent severe outcomes like hospitalization and death.
- They are safe, highly effective, free, and widely available. Most are pill medications that can be taken at home, Some are given by IV.

What COVID-19 treatments are available?

- There are currently three prescription treatments, Paxlovid, Lagevrio (molnupiravir), and Veklury (remdesivir). Paxlovid and Lagevrio (molnupiravir) are pills that can be taken at home, and Veklury (remdesivir) is given by IV.
- The pill medications are free. The IV medications might have a charge.
- Treatments must be taken within 5-7 days of when symptoms begin. So, if you start to feel sick, act fast to get a COVID-19 test and seek free treatment.
- Most adults and some teens are eligible for treatment.

How do COVID-19 treatments work?

The available COVID-19 treatments are antiviral medications, which can stop the virus from multiplying in your body and infecting more of your cells. They have been shown to be effective for stopping COVID-19 illness from becoming serious and may help you to test negative sooner.

What are the benefits of treatment?

- COVID-19 treatments are highly effective for stopping COVID-19 illness from getting serious.
- Scientific evidence shows that COVID-19 treatments work to prevent serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19 by up to 50 to 88% (they have been shown to cut the risk in half or more).

About COVID-19 Treatments Continued 2

- They can stop the virus from multiplying in your body and infecting more of your cells, which may help you to test negative sooner.
- Early evidence also suggests they may lower the risk of developing long COVID symptoms.

Who should take COVID-19 treatment?

Everyone 12 years and older who tests positive for COVID-19 and has symptoms should seek evaluation for COVID-19 treatments, which are free regardless of insurance or citizenship status.

COVID-19 treatments are recommended for those who have certain experiences and conditions that put them at higher risk for worse COVID-19 illness, such as being 50 years and older, not being up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccinations, obesity, physical inactivity, smoking, asthma, diabetes, mental health conditions like depression, being of a racial/ethnic minority, and more. In fact, most adults and some teens are eligible and should take COVID-19 treatment.

When should I take a COVID-19 treatment?

COVID-19 medications must be taken within the first 5-7 days of symptoms to work. So if you start to feel sick, act fast to get a COVID-19 test and free COVID-19 medications. Get treatment while your illness is mild - don't wait until your illness gets worse.

Make a COVID-19 Personal Plan in advance, including the optimal medication choice and how to access the medication.

Can you get treatment for COVID-19 if you are vaccinated?

Yes, COVID-19 medications are beneficial for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people. COVID-19 vaccines should be taken before you get COVID, and COVID-19 medications should be taken after you get COVID to prevent serious illness.

About COVID-19 Treatments Continued 3

Where do I get COVID-19 treatments?

You have multiple options to find free COVID-19 medications. You do not need to have insurance or U.S. citizenship.

- **Call your doctor**, urgent care center, or your insurance for help with making an appointment.
- **Call the statewide COVID-19 hotline** for questions and help with finding free COVID-19 treatment, at 833-422-4255.
- **Find a Test to Treat location** – these are sites that offer COVID-19 testing and treatment services. Call the statewide COVID-19 hotline at 833-422-4255 or go to covid-19-test-to-treat-locator-dhhs.hub.arcgis.com for the COVID-19 Test to Treat Locator
- **Make a free phone or video appointment** through California’s free telehealth provider and talk to a health care provider the same or next day. Call 833-686-5051 or go to sesamecare.com/covidca.
- Some pharmacies have pharmacists that may be able to give you a prescription for treatment. Call your pharmacy to ask if they offer this service.

My friend took Paxlovid and she got better but then got sick again. Is that something I have to worry about? And if so, wouldn’t it be better to not use treatment?

There are cases where someone’s symptoms go away and then mild symptoms return after a few days, sometimes leading to a new positive test a few days after testing negative. In the media, this is frequently called “Paxlovid rebound” or “viral rebound”. Rebound occurs in roughly 10% of people who take Paxlovid and there have been no reports of people with rebound progressing to severe disease. Rebound symptoms are mild. Rebound can also occur in people who have COVID-19 and don’t take Paxlovid.

The benefits of treatment outweigh the risks of rebound. Rebound is NOT treatment failure as the medications still work to prevent severe illness. The CDC says that a short return of symptoms may be part of the natural course of COVID-19 infection in some people, regardless of whether they got treatment. The CDC does not recommend taking another course of Paxlovid if experiencing “rebound” symptoms.

About COVID-19 Treatments Continued 4

Should I get COVID-19 treatment instead of getting vaccinated?

Treatment is not intended as a substitute for vaccination. Being vaccinated and boosted are still the most important things that you can do to protect yourself from getting very sick from COVID-19. If you get COVID-19, COVID-19 treatments will help stop your illness from getting serious.

Vaccination appointments can be made by visiting myturn.ca.gov or calling the California COVID-19 hotline 1-833-422-4255.

I'm young and healthy, why should I get treatment?

Everyone 12 years and older should seek evaluation for COVID-19 medications if they have symptoms and test positive. Most American adults and some teens have certain common conditions and experiences that make them higher risk for worse COVID-19 illness, like physical inactivity, smoking, and mental health conditions like depression.

COVID-19 medications have been shown to be effective for stopping COVID-19 illness from getting serious, but they must be taken within the first 5-7 days of symptoms while the illness is still mild. They may help you to test negative sooner.

Early evidence also suggests that the COVID-19 medication Paxlovid may lower the risk of developing Long COVID symptoms.

Scientific evidence shows that COVID-19 treatments work to prevent serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19 by up to 50 to 88% (they have been shown to cut the risk in half or more).

How much do treatments cost?

The pill medications are free (the IV medications might have a charge). You do not need to have insurance or be a U.S. citizen.

You should not be charged for the pill medications at any site. Call the statewide COVID-19 hotline if you were incorrectly charged for COVID-19 pills at 833-422-4255.

About COVID-19 Treatments Continued 5

I don't have a regular doctor – what should I do?

There are lots of options for those who do not have a regular doctor. It is important not to delay since treatment must be taken within the first 5-7 days of your symptoms.

- A. Call your local urgent care center.
- B. If you have insurance, you can call the number on your insurance card to get help with making an appointment.
- C. Find a Test-to-Treat location near you. To find a site, call the statewide COVID-19 hotline at 833-422-4255 or use the COVID-19 [Test to Treat Locator](#).
- D. Some pharmacies have pharmacists that may be able to give you a prescription for treatment. Call your pharmacy to see if they offer this service.

If you don't have insurance or the options above don't work, you can:

- E. Make a phone or video appointment with a health care provider through California's free telehealth service; call 833-686-5051.

Are COVID-19 treatments experimental drugs? How can I know it's safe?

The currently available COVID-19 treatments (Paxlovid, Lagevrio (molnupiravir), and Remdesivir) are fully approved or authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after scientific evidence showed that they are safe and effective for reducing the risk of serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. An emergency use authorization means that based on available data, the potential benefits of the treatment (preventing severe COVID-19 and death) outweigh the potential risks.

Do COVID-19 treatments reduce the likelihood of long COVID?

Early evidence suggests that the COVID-19 medication Paxlovid may lower the risk of developing long COVID symptoms.

About COVID-19 Treatments Continued 6

What are the side effects?

Most people have no side effects. The most common side effects for Paxlovid, the most commonly prescribed COVID-19 medication, are mild, such as nausea or a bitter taste.

Do I still need to isolate after taking COVID-19 medication?

Yes, even if you have taken COVID-19 medication, you must still follow regular isolation guidelines. For more information on this, visit the CDPH website: [covid19.ca.gov/quarantine-and-isolation/](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/quarantine-and-isolation/)

If you must go to a clinic to get treatment, you should call ahead of time and follow the precautions from the clinic. Often patients who have COVID-19 will be seen in a special room, or sometimes in an outdoor setting like in their car. You should call ahead to the clinic if possible.

Additional References

[COVID-19 Treatments](#)

Statewide COVID-19 Hotline: 833-422-4255

For more information about COVID-19 treatments and help with finding treatment, call the statewide COVID-19 Hotline.

The statewide call center is open seven days a week:

Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM (PST)

Saturday & Sunday, 8:00 am to 5:00 PM (PST)

Also see: [CDPH What to Do if You Test Positive for COVID-19 webpage](#)

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