



If I get COVID, is there a medication I can take?



Most people who become infected with COVID can recover at home without any treatment. To find out how to care for yourself at home or when you need to call your doctor, visit: rebrand.ly/When-To-Call

People who are sick enough to go to hospital will be given medications there to reduce their symptoms and help them recover. Medications are also now available to people outside of hospitals to help prevent them from getting seriously ill.

Who can get these medications?

Medications to treat COVID are for people who are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID. That's because the research on these medications was generally done on people who were at higher risk of serious illness. The medications are also in short supply.



If you have COVID, please call your family doctor right away to discuss potential treatment if one of the following applies to you:

01 You have an immune system that is weakened by a health condition or medications. That includes, for example, people with:

- » Ongoing cancer treatments
- » Previous organ or stem-cell transplants
- » Genetic disorders that result in a very weak immune system
- » Advanced or untreated HIV
- » Immune systems weakened by medications such as methotrexate, biologic drugs (these often end in 'mab,' 'mib' or 'nib) or high-dose steroids (Prednisone 20mg or higher)

02 You are over 60

03 You are over 50 and you belong to one of the following groups:

- » You are Indigenous OR
- » You have had 0 or 1 dose of a COVID vaccine OR
- » Your last dose of a COVID vaccine was more than 6 months ago OR
- » You have diabetes, obesity, serious kidney problems, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy or sickle cell disease or some other chronic illness

Recommendations for treatment will depend on how the evidence changes over time and also on availability of treatments. Your family doctor is working hard to stay up to date and can help guide you.

If you do not have a family doctor, go to one of Ontario's COVID Clinical Assessment Centres. To find one near you, visit: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations>

Do not wait for your symptoms to become severe. The medications only work if you take them within 5 to 7 days of your positive test or first symptoms of COVID.

What medications are available?

Right now, people with COVID may be able to access five different prescription medicines that have been proven to reduce their risk of being admitted to hospital because of COVID. **All these medications should be given within 5 to 7 days of your symptoms starting.**

Some of the medications are recommended for only a small group of people in hospitals or nursing homes who are given the drugs through an IV (intravenous) tube. Others can be easily used at home when prescribed by your family doctor. Some of these medications have been around a long time while others have been developed recently.

There are two common medications that your family doctor might prescribe if you have COVID and are at high risk of serious illness:

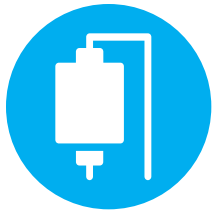


Budesonide is a puffer that you take twice a day for 10 to 14 days. It works by decreasing inflammation in your lungs and is often used by people who have asthma. Budesonide is only proven to help if given within 7 days of when people start to have trouble breathing. We think it can reduce how long COVID symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath will last.

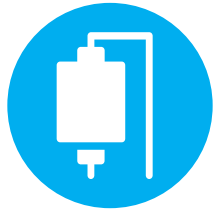


Fluvoxamine is a pill that you take for 10 to 14 days. The drug has been around for a long time and is typically used to treat depression. Now it has been shown to have a positive effect on the immune systems of people with COVID. When started within 7 days of COVID symptoms, Fluvoxamine may help some people decrease their risk of needing to go to hospital. It must be prescribed carefully because it can interact badly with commonly used medicines.

There are three medications that you can only get if you are referred to a special program for people who are at highest risk of becoming severely ill from COVID, including those with very weak immune systems.



Sotrovimab is an antibody given through an infusion (IV) one time only. The medication helps boost your body's ability to fight the COVID infection. It must be provided within 7 days of COVID symptoms starting. The supply of Sotrovimab is very limited worldwide.



Remdesivir is also a medication given by IV. It is an antiviral medication that helps prevent the virus from reproducing in your body. It has to be given 3 times, on 3 days in a row. It is also used for people in hospital with COVID. Because of the difficulties giving this medication and because it is in very short supply, it is prioritized for patients admitted to hospital.



Nirmatrelvir / ritonavir (Paxlovid) is a new pill that mixes two different medications including one that directly attacks the COVID virus. It helps people at high risk of becoming seriously sick stay out of hospital. It is taken twice a day for 5 days and must be started within 5 days of the person showing symptoms of COVID. Paxlovid can interfere with many commonly used drugs. Because of this, a pharmacist familiar with Paxlovid will often need to be involved to decide if it is safe for you to take it. Very few doses of this medication are available in Canada today.

Are there any other medications that are recommended to treat COVID?

There are no other drugs or vitamins recommended to treat COVID in people outside of hospital. For example, the best research studies show that Azithromycin, Ivermectin and Hydrochloroquine are not helpful in treating or preventing COVID and may cause harm. There is also good evidence that Vitamin D, Interferon and Colchicine are not helpful in treating or preventing COVID.

More information on medications used to treat COVID can be found in this guidance written for clinicians:

<https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/sciencebrief/clinical-practice-guideline-summary-recommended-drugs-and-biologics-in-adult-patients-with-covid-19-version-9-0/>

Icon credit: **inhaler, IV**