



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



If you have COVID, you must self-isolate. If you need care, you should not hesitate to call your doctor. Learn more here: [rebrand.ly/Feeling-Unwell](https://rebrand.ly/Feeling-Unwell).

Most people who get COVID can recover at home without treatment. To find out how to care for yourself at home or when to call your doctor, visit [rebrand.ly/When-To-Call](https://rebrand.ly/When-To-Call).

People who are sick enough to go to hospital will be given medications to help them recover. For people who are at higher risk of serious illness, medications are available that can help prevent them from needing to be cared for in hospital.

## Who can get these medications?

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



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



**You have an immune system that is weakened by a health condition or medications.**

For example, DiGeorge Syndrome, cancer chemotherapy or high-dose steroid treatment.



**You have any of the following chronic conditions:**

Diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, heart failure, lung disease including cystic fibrosis, serious liver or kidney problems, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy or sickle cell disease.



**You are 70 or older.**



**You have not had any doses of a COVID vaccine.**



**You are pregnant.**

Call your pregnancy care provider.

*If you are worried that your health, age and vaccination status put you at greater risk of serious illness, or are unsure if you might qualify for treatment, please contact your family doctor.*

Recommendations about treatment change as we learn more about who can benefit from them and as the COVID virus changes. 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>.

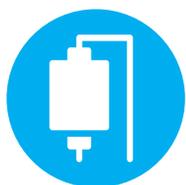
**Do not wait for your symptoms to become severe. The medications only work if you take them within 5 to 7 days of your first symptoms of COVID.**

### What medications are available?

There are four different prescription medications that can be used for people at a higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID. **All of these medications should be started within 5 to 7 days of your first symptoms.**

Some medications are given through an intravenous (IV) tube. Others can be taken at home. Some of these medications have been around a long time while others have been developed recently.

**Two medications are recommended for people with symptoms who are at higher risk of serious illness. You may need to be referred to a special program for these.**



**Nirmatrelvir / ritonavir (Paxlovid)** is a 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. To decide if Paxlovid is safe for you, a pharmacist will usually review your other medications. In many cases, this drug can be prescribed after virtual assessment and shipped to your home.



**Remdesivir** is a medication given by IV. It is an antiviral medication that helps prevent the virus from reproducing in your body. It is given once daily for 3 days. Because 3 doses need to be given by IV, Remdesivir is often used for people who cannot take pills.

**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.

## 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. Monoclonal antibodies like Sotrovimab are no longer recommended. Sotrovimab does not work well against the BA.2 Omicron sub-variant. The best research studies show that Azithromycin, Ivermectin and Hydroxychloroquine 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 Science Briefs from the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table: <https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/brief-category/infectious-diseases-clinical-care/>.