



COVID-19 ORAL TREATMENTS

Information for residents living in residential aged care homes and their families

January 2024

The Australian Government continues to support the aged care sector with access to two oral COVID-19 treatments, Lagevrio® (molnupiravir) and Paxlovid® (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir).

Lagevrio and Paxlovid are both listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and available from local pharmacies with a prescription.

Find out more about Lagevrio and Paxlovid via the COVID-19 treatment PBS factsheets: www.pbs.gov.au/browse/publications#Covid19

How the oral antiviral treatments work

Lagevrio and Paxlovid are oral antiviral treatments that must be prescribed by an authorised prescriber e.g. general practitioner or nurse practitioner.

Both treatments work by blocking the ability of the COVID-19 virus to multiply in the human body.

Treatment should be administered as soon as possible after diagnosis of COVID-19 and within 5 days of symptom onset or testing positive for COVID-19 to achieve the most benefit.

How the oral antiviral treatments are used

Lagevrio capsules are taken twice a day for 5 days. If you cannot swallow capsules whole, please consult with your treating doctor.

Paxlovid tablets include two active substances of the medicine, nirmatrelvir and ritonavir, which are given as separate tablets, taken together twice a day for 5 days. The tablets should be swallowed whole and not chewed, broken, or crushed.

Side effects

The most common side effects reported in clinical trials of Lagevrio® were diarrhoea, nausea, and dizziness. If you start taking Lagevrio you will be closely monitored for these side effects.

For Paxlovid, side effects reported included diarrhoea, vomiting, high blood pressure, muscle pains, altered taste and headache.

Who should take oral antiviral treatments?

Your doctor and the clinical care team will work with you and your carer to decide whether an oral treatment such, as Lagevrio or Paxlovid, is suitable for you.

The oral treatment will be **most beneficial** for those at higher risk for severe disease after testing positive with COVID-19.

Risk factors include older age, certain medical conditions, being moderately or severely immunocompromised, and previous hospitalisation due to COVID-19.

Eligibility for oral antiviral treatments

Adults 70 years of age or older, with mild to moderate COVID-19 confirmed by a PCR test or a rapid antigen test (RAT), can be prescribed PBS-subsidised oral antiviral treatment by their doctor or authorised nurse practitioner where:

- treatment is commenced within 5 days of the onset of symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19, or
- treatment is started as soon as possible after a positive test if asymptomatic.

For adults 70 years of age or older, no further risk factors for progression to severe disease are required for PBS eligibility.

You may be eligible if you're:

- people over 50 with additional risk factor/s for developing severe disease
- First Nations people, aged 30 years or over, with one risk factor
- people aged 18 years or older, with moderate to severe immunocompromise or have been previously hospitalised from COVID-19, and are re-infected.

Talk to your health professional about your risk factors and treatment options, read about eligibility: www.health.gov.au/health-alerts/covid-19/treatments/eligibility

People aged over 70 years do not need to have symptoms to commence treatment following a positive test. People aged under 70 years require other eligibility criteria.

Who should NOT have the oral antiviral treatments?

At its November 2022 meeting, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee recommended an administrative note be added to the PBS listing of Lagevrio stating that treatment with molnupiravir should be considered only if Paxlovid is contraindicated or otherwise unsuitable:

www.pbs.gov.au/info/industry/listing/elements/pbac-meetings/pbac-outcomes/recommendations-made-by-the-pbac-november-2022

Paxlovid is not safe to use with certain medications and is contraindicated in people with severe kidney or liver disease, further details are available on the TGA website: www.tga.gov.au/tga-provisionally-approves-pfizer-australia-pty-ltds-covid-19-treatment-nirmatrelvir-ritonavir-paxlovid#pi

Your treating doctor and clinical care team will need to carefully review your current medications and medical conditions to see if it is safe for you to use.

Advanced consent

Providing consent for the oral antiviral treatments in a timely manner is important, especially if you or your carer have a substitute decision maker (medical power or attorney or guardian).

Please talk to your doctor and/or the clinical care team in your residential aged care home if you have any questions and discuss early consent to receive oral treatment for COVID-19 if recommended for yourself or your carer.

Residents should be guided by their primary care providers, who play a vital role in determining eligibility, discussing risk factors, and prescribing the best clinically appropriate treatment.

Oral treatments and vaccination

An oral antiviral treatment is not intended to be used as a substitute for vaccination against COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination helps protect yourself, your carer, family and the wider community from severe illness from COVID-19.

Adverse events

Adverse events are unintended and sometimes harmful occurrences associated with the use of a medicine. If you have any concerns about an adverse event, it is important to speak to a health professional.

Read more at www.tga.gov.au/reporting-adverse-events

Translated resources

You can find translated information on the COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments in over 60 languages: www.health.gov.au/resources/translated (search COVID-19).

More information

Learn about oral treatments www.health.gov.au/topics/covid-19/oral-treatments or call the healthdirect helpline on 1800 022 222 and speak to a nurse.