



Response to the COVID-19 pandemic – Investing in effective treatments

The Australian Government is investing in pandemic treatments to ensure Australians can access effective and proven medical treatments for COVID-19 to prevent and reduce the worst effects of the disease and speed their recovery.

A range of medicines have been approved for use in Australia for treating people with differing severity of COVID-19 disease, and for the prevention of COVID-19, including:

- sotrovimab (XEVDY®), casirivimab with imdevimab (RONAPREVE®), nirmatrelvir with ritonavir (PAXLOVID®), and molnupiravir (LAGEVRIO®) for mild to moderate COVID-19, particularly among high risk patients
- tixagevimab with cilgavimab (EVUSHELD®) for pre-exposure prophylaxis (prevention) for moderate to severely immunocompromised patients, and
- remdesivir (VEKLURY®) for moderate to severe COVID-19 in patients requiring oxygen supplementation.

The Australian Government has invested in significant courses of these medications, many of which have been added to the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) for distribution to states and territories in response to outbreaks of COVID-19.

In January and February 2022, in response to the Omicron variant outbreak, more than 7,500 doses of sotrovimab, 3,705 doses (22,230 units) of remdesivir were deployed from the NMS.

In February 2022, deliveries of COVID-19 antivirals arrived into the NMS and 69,618 doses of lagevrio (previously known as molnupiravir) were deployed from the NMS including delivery to all 2,902 residential aged care facilities. This is a total of 80,823 doses across all treatments.

In addition, molnupiravir has also been added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for Australians with mild to moderate COVID-19 who have a high risk for developing severe disease. This medication has been listed from 1 March 2022 to 31 January 2024, including for use among:

- adults aged 65 or older, with two other risk factors for severe disease
- people identifying as of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, who are 50 years of age or older with two other risk factors for severe disease, or
- the moderately to severely immunocompromised.

Why is this important?

The availability of effective and approved treatments for COVID-19 improve the chances and speed of recovery and saved the lives of many Australians who have contracted COVID-19 since the outbreak of the pandemic.

The Australian Government has invested significant funding in securing reliable supplies of medication which has enabled it to respond by providing medication from the NMS to states and territories dealing with outbreaks.

Many of the treatments have been used in high risk populations and settings including in residential aged care facilities experiencing an outbreak and among immunocompromised individuals at risk of contracting severe disease from the virus.

The Australian Government's investment secured a strong position with considerable purchasing power to ensure access to these life-saving medications, in a competitive marketplace and in circumstances where supply has been constrained.

Who will benefit?

All Australians will benefit from a secure and reliable supply of effective and approved treatments for COVID-19.

These medications will be available for use when clinically recommended by clinicians treating people with COVID-19 ranging from mild to severe disease.

The availability of molnupiravir on the PBS will also mean eligible patients with COVID-19 and a prescription will be able to access subsidised treatment in the community for their infection, which may prevent them needing to be hospitalised.