



Oral antiviral treatments for COVID-19 and eligibility

20 July 2022

Oral antiviral treatments for COVID-19

Oral antiviral treatments for COVID-19 are medications taken by mouth as tablets or capsules for eligible people who have tested positive to COVID-19. Many people will be able to receive this treatment for COVID-19 in their own homes and won't need to travel to hospital.

How and when you should take COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments

The medications are taken as tablets or capsules every 12 hours for 5 days, within 5 days from when symptoms start, or as soon as possible after testing positive for COVID-19 if you have no symptoms.

Who is eligible for oral antiviral treatments

Older people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

You may be eligible for antiviral oral treatments if you test positive for COVID-19, and you are one of the following:

- 70 years or older, regardless of risk factors, and with or without symptoms
- 50 years or older with **2** additional risk factors (listed below)
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, 30 years or older and with **2** risk factors (listed below).

Risk factors for these groups include:

- living in residential aged care
- living with disability with multiple conditions and/or frailty (not limited to living in supported accommodation)
- neurological conditions like stroke or dementia and demyelinating conditions e.g. multiple sclerosis, Guillain-Barre Syndrome
- chronic respiratory conditions including COPD, moderate or severe asthma

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- obesity
 - Diabetes (type I or II requiring medication)
 - heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies
 - kidney failure or cirrhosis
 - living remotely with reduced access to higher level healthcare.

People aged 18 years and older

If you test positive for COVID-19 and are 18 years and older, you may be eligible for antiviral oral treatments if you are moderately to severely immunocompromised.

Moderately or severely immunocompromising conditions include:

- blood cancer or some red blood cell disorders (thalassemia, sickle cell disease)
- transplant recipient
- primary or acquired (HIV) immunodeficiency
- chemotherapy or whole-body radiotherapy in the last 3 months
- high dose corticosteroids or pulse corticosteroid therapy in the last 3 months
- immunosuppressive treatments in the last 3 months
- rituximab in the last 12 months
- cerebral palsy or down syndrome
- congenital heart disease
- living with disability with multiple conditions and/or frailty.

These medications are not suitable for everyone. Yarn to your doctor to check your eligibility.

How to get an oral antiviral treatment, and where

You need a prescription to receive oral COVID-19 treatments so talk to your doctor first. You can get the medicine from pharmacies with a prescription.

Are oral antiviral treatments subsidised?

Eligible people can access subsidised oral antiviral treatments through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme with a prescription from an authorised prescriber, for example a doctor.

People who test positive for COVID-19 but do NOT have a Medicare card can contact a GP respiratory clinic for advice regarding treatment options.

Do not take COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments if...

Oral antiviral treatments are not recommended for use in women who are pregnant or breastfeeding – making it even more important that pregnant and breastfeeding women get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Some treatments are not safe to use alongside certain other medications and should not be used in people with severe kidney or liver disease.

Oral antiviral treatments and fertility

If you are prescribed an oral antiviral treatment for COVID-19 you must take extra care about using contraception as the treatment may affect how your birth control works. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions about different contraceptives and what is best for you.

Vaccination and oral antiviral treatments

These treatments are not intended to be used as a substitute for vaccination against COVID-19.

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself, your loved ones, and the wider community from COVID-19.

Approval of the COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments

All medicines in Australia must be approved for use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). The TGA are the scientists and medical experts who regulate and approve all vaccines, medicines and other medical products for use in Australia. The TGA has strict standards for allowing medicines to be used in Australia. They only approve medicines that are safe and effective. This includes the COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments.

More information

If you haven't had all your COVID-19 vaccinations yet, including boosters, have a yarn to your health worker or find out where you can [book an appointment](#).

Visit the [Department of Health website](#) or call 1800 020 080 to find out more information about [oral treatments](#).