Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Information sheet for people with disability: COVID-19 oral medicines

25 July 2022

There are two oral COVID-19 antiviral medicines approved for use in Australia, and available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. They are called Paxlovid and Lagevrio. You can be treated with one of the medicines if you are over 18 years old with a COVID-19 infection and are at higher risk of becoming very sick.

It is important that you plan ahead:

- Speak with your doctor in advance, to discuss if the COVID-19 medicines will be right for you if you get COVID-19.
- Plan what you will do if you get COVID-19.
    - If you get COVID-19, you will need to ask your doctor for a script and to find out where you get the medicines from, for example: your local pharmacy or hospital.
    - Take those actions to get your COVID-19 medicine as soon as possible.
    - The medicine course needs to be started within 5 days of symptoms starting (or, for people who are 70 years of age or older who do not have symptoms, as soon as possible after a positive COVID-19 test).

The advantages of these medicines are:

- They can be taken as tablets or capsules.
- You can take these medicines at home.
- You will not need to go to hospital or stay in hospital (unless you get very sick) while you have COVID-19.

The new medicines will help some people, but they are not suitable for everyone. Your doctor can help you work out what is right for you.

The chart on page 3 explains a bit more about who can get the COVID-19 medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

If you are at high risk of becoming very sick, get tested quickly if you get symptoms.

An online symptom checker is available here: www.healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker/tool

This can help you to identify if you may have COVID-19, and what type of support you may need for your symptoms.

State and territory pathways for COVID-19 oral medicines

You can call the National Coronavirus Helpline and they can help you understand if you're eligible for COVID-19 medicines. In some states, they can help you to make an appointment with a GP. You can ask the person if they can help you with this when you call.

This service can be accessed by selecting Option 1 on the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080.

If you call this Helpline, you should have details of your preferred GP practice ready to give them.

If Healthdirect can't reach your preferred practice they will put you in touch with a General Practice Respiratory Clinic (GPRC). GPRCs provide people with access to testing and treatment for respiratory systems.

More details about the Healthdirect pathways are here:
https://about.healthdirect.gov.au/supporting-access-to-antiviral-treatment

For people with swallowing difficulties

If you have difficulty swallowing tablets, you should speak to your doctor about what treatment is right for you.

The NPS MedicineWise and the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia's Don't Rush to Crush have published information explaining how Lagevrio can be modified for people with swallowing difficulties and enteral feeding tubes.

Paxlovid should be swallowed whole and not chewed, broken or crushed.

You should also discuss this with your pharmacist when collecting your prescription.

Vaccination – stay up to date

Vaccination is still very important. Australia's COVID-19 vaccines are safe, and they work well to reduce your chance of getting very sick from COVID-19.

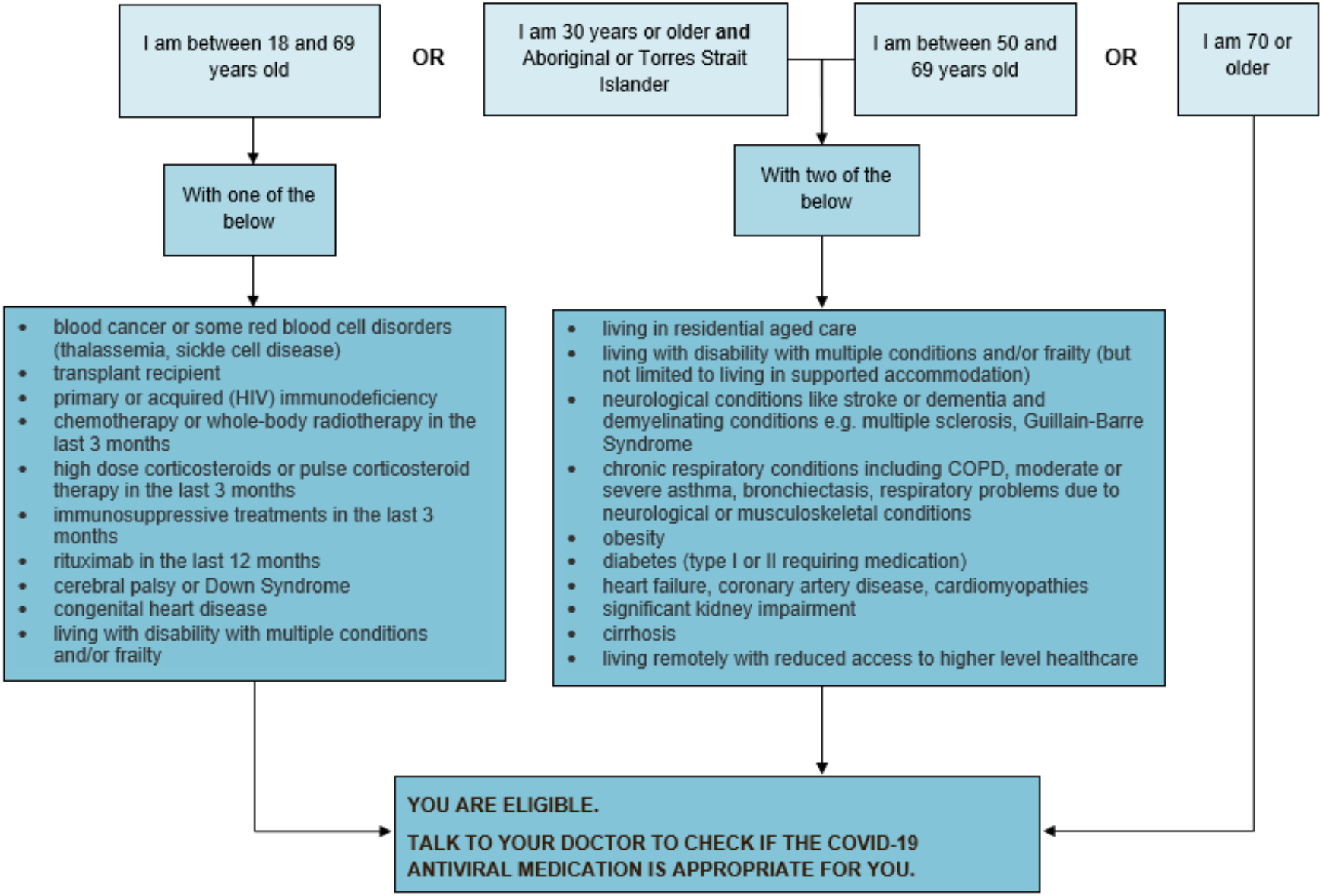
The best way to protect yourself from getting very sick from COVID-19 is to make sure you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters.

If you are not sure how many doses you should have, or if you think you missed a vaccine dose, ask your doctor.

Your doctor can help you get any vaccinations you may have missed.

More information about COVID-19 vaccination [<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/disability-sector/people-with-disability>]

COVID-19 oral medicines: Things to consider



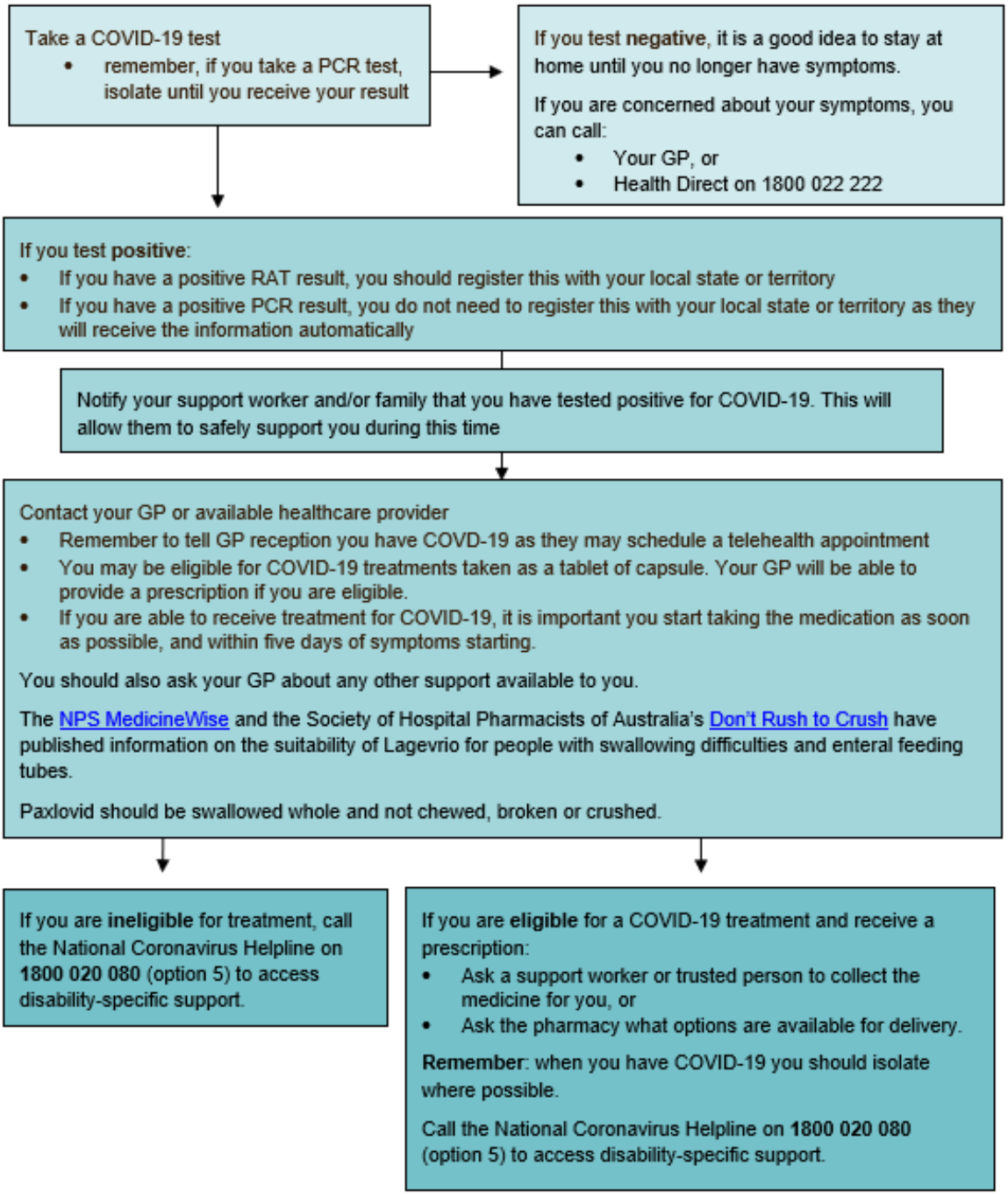
How to access COVID-19 medication

Before you get COVID-19

Make a plan for what you will do if you or someone who supports you gets COVID-19.

The following resources can help you to plan:

- Person-centred Emergency Preparedness COVID-19 Guide
- Department of Health COVID-19 treatments and winter preparedness webinar

Speak to your GP to see if COVID-19 treatments are suitable for you.

Steps to access COVID-19 medication