

## COVID-19 treatment for people in the community who are at highest risk of developing severe disease

Treatment for COVID-19 is available for people who are not in hospital but who are considered at highest risk of progression to severe disease, hospital admission or death.

The *high-risk* group includes people who have

- [Down's syndrome](#)
- a rare condition affecting the brain or nerves (including [multiple sclerosis](#), [motor neurone disease](#), [Huntington's disease](#) or [myasthenia gravis](#))
- sickle cell disease
- certain types of cancer
- HIV or AIDS
- a severe liver condition (such as [cirrhosis](#))
- [chronic kidney disease](#) (CKD) stage 4 or 5
- had an organ transplant
- certain autoimmune or inflammatory conditions (such as [rheumatoid arthritis](#) or [inflammatory bowel disease](#))
- a condition or treatment that makes you more likely to get infections
- had certain types of chemotherapy in the last 12 months
- had radiotherapy in the last 6 months

## What treatments are there for COVID-19?

### Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid®)

Paxlovid® is a medicine that helps you to overcome COVID-19 infection by stopping the virus multiplying in your body. It may help you to get better faster.

Paxlovid® contains nirmatrelvir (PF-07321332) and ritonavir. Nirmatrelvir works against the COVID-19 virus and ritonavir makes the effect of nirmatrelvir last longer.

In a clinical trial, Paxlovid® reduced the risk of hospitalisation or death by 89% in people with COVID-19 who were at high risk of becoming very ill. The Paxlovid® was started soon after their COVID-19 symptoms started.

### Who can have Paxlovid®?

Paxlovid® is used in adults 18 years of age and older with mild-to-moderate COVID-19.

You may be eligible for Paxlovid® if **ALL** of these apply:

- you're in a high risk group
- you've had a positive PCR or LFT test for COVID-19 within the last 5 days
- you have had coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms within the last 5 days

The LFT test result must be registered with [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

### Who may not be able to have Paxlovid®?

Paxlovid® is not suitable for some people. To make sure it's safe for you, tell your health care professional if:

- you have any allergies
- you are pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or breastfeeding
- you have kidney disease
- you have or have had liver disease
- you take any other medicines including any that you buy over the counter and herbal medicines
- you have an intolerance to lactose or other sugars

Do not take Paxlovid® if:

- if you are allergic to nirmatrelvir, ritonavir or any of the other ingredients of this medicine
- if you have severe liver or kidney disease
- if you are taking a medicine that causes serious side effects when it is taken with Paxlovid®. If you take any other medicines, including ones that you buy, you should tell your nurse, pharmacist or doctor to make sure that it is safe for you to take Paxlovid®. The information leaflet that comes with the Paxlovid® contains a list of these medicines. You can read the leaflet by clicking on this [link](#).

### How is Paxlovid® taken?

- Paxlovid® comes as 5 daily dose blister cards. Each daily blister card contains 4 pink nirmatrelvir tablets (150 mg each) and 2 white ritonavir tablets (100 mg each). The card shows which tablets to take in the morning and which to take in the evening.
- The recommended dose of Paxlovid® is **two** tablets of nirmatrelvir with **one** tablet of ritonavir twice daily (in the morning and at night). Take the tablets by mouth.
- For each dose, take **all 3 tablets** (2 pink nirmatrelvir tablets and 1 white ritonavir tablet) together at the same time.
- Swallow the tablets whole. Do not chew, break or crush the tablets. You can take Paxlovid® with or without meals.
- A course of treatment lasts 5 days.
- Lower doses of Paxlovid® are used for patients with mild kidney disease. If you have severe kidney disease you must not take Paxlovid®.
- Always take this medicine exactly as your doctor or pharmacist has told you. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

### Does Paxlovid® have any side effects?

Like all medicines, Paxlovid® can cause side effects but not everybody gets them. Most side-effects are mild and short-lived.

Diarrhoea, vomiting and an altered sense of taste are common side effects. They affect up to 1 in 10 people. Paxlovid® is still being studied, so it is possible that all of the risks are not known at this time.

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. You can also report side effects directly via the [Coronavirus Yellow Card Reporting site](#) or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store. By reporting side effects, you are providing more information on the safety of this medicine.

### Other medicines and Paxlovid®

Many medicines interact with Paxlovid® and you can have serious side effects if you take them together. Make sure you tell your doctor or pharmacist if you take any other medicines.

Paxlovid® treatment may make some medicines less effective, for example oral contraceptive pills ('the pill') and medicines used to treat HIV infection.

Tell your doctor before you start taking a new medicine with Paxlovid®. Stopping other medicines or changing a dose can also affect how Paxlovid® works. Discuss any changes with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

### Paxlovid® and pregnancy and breastfeeding

If you are able to become pregnant, use effective barrier contraception (for example a condom, female condom, diaphragm or cap) while you are taking Paxlovid® and until you have completed one full menstrual cycle after the last dose of Paxlovid®.

Paxlovid® can stop combined oral contraceptive pills ('the pill') from working properly. If you use a combined oral contraceptive pill, use a barrier method of contraception **as well as** the oral contraceptive pill while you are taking Paxlovid® and until you have completed one full menstrual cycle after the last dose of Paxlovid®.

If you find out that you are pregnant, or became pregnant while taking Paxlovid®, or shortly after, please report this by contacting the UK COVID-19 Antivirals in Pregnancy Registry on 0344 892 0909 or by asking your doctor to do this on your behalf. For more information go to [medicinesinpregnancy.org/COVID-19-Antivirals-Pregnancy-Registry/](https://medicinesinpregnancy.org/COVID-19-Antivirals-Pregnancy-Registry/)

In addition, please inform your doctor as you will need to be followed up closely.

If you are breastfeeding, you should stop breastfeeding and/or stop giving your child expressed milk during the course of treatment with Paxlovid® and for 7 days afterwards.

For advice on how to temporarily change to bottle feeding your child and manage your milk supply during this time, please talk to your health visitor. There is also information at [www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life).

## Sotrovimab (Xevudy®)

Sotrovimab is a biological medicine. It's also known as a neutralising monoclonal antibody (nMAB).

nMABs are synthetic proteins that act like human antibodies in the immune system. They are made by cloning an antibody that can stick to the spike protein of the virus and neutralise it. They stick to the virus and stop it from getting into your lungs and causing an infection.

If you are eligible for COVID-19 treatment you will usually be offered neutralising monoclonal antibodies (nMABs) such as sotrovimab as a first treatment rather than antiviral medicines.

A clinical study showed that sotrovimab decreased the risk of hospitalisation or death by 85% in patients with mild-to moderate disease and at least one risk factor for disease progression.

### Who can have sotrovimab?

Sotrovimab can be given to most adults, and children aged 12 years or older who weigh at least 40 kg (6 stone 4 lb).

You may be eligible for sotrovimab if **ALL** of these apply:

- you're in the high-risk group above
- you've had a positive PCR or LFT test for COVID-19 within the last 5 days
- you've had coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms within the last 5 days

### Who may not be able to have sotrovimab?

Sotrovimab is not suitable for some people. To make sure it's safe for you, tell your health care professional if:

- you have any allergies
- you are pregnant, trying to get pregnant or breastfeeding

## How is sotrovimab given?

Sotrovimab is given to you through a drip in your arm (infusion) over 30 minutes. It will be given in hospital or at a local centre. The dose of sotrovimab is 500 mg and you'll only need 1 dose. You will then need to be monitored for around 30 minutes after the infusion is complete.

## Does sotrovimab have any side effects?

Like all medicines, sotrovimab can cause side effects in some people, but many people have no side effects or only minor ones.

The most common side effects (happen in up to 1 in 10 people) are a mild allergic reaction (hypersensitivity) which can include feeling sick (nausea), feeling dizzy, an itchy rash and redness (this may be less noticeable on black or brown skin) and warmth on your skin.

These symptoms usually happen within the first 24 hours and should go away on their own.

In rare cases, sotrovimab may cause a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. You can also report side effects directly via the [Coronavirus Yellow Card Reporting site](#) or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store. By reporting side effects, you are providing more information on the safety of this medicine.

## Other medicines and sotrovimab

There's no evidence to say that sotrovimab will affect any other medicine you are taking.

Sotrovimab may affect how well the COVID-19 vaccine works. If you have been treated with sotrovimab, tell your doctor if you are going to have a COVID-19 vaccine or booster.

There's not enough information to say that herbal remedies or supplements are safe to take with sotrovimab.

## Molnupiravir (Lagevrio®)

Molnupiravir is an antiviral medicine that works by stopping the virus that causes coronavirus (COVID-19) from growing and spreading. It's used to treat early COVID-19 infection and help to prevent more severe symptoms.

Molnupiravir comes as capsules. You'll need to start taking the capsules as soon as possible after you have tested positive for COVID-19 and within 5 days of your symptoms starting.

If you are eligible for COVID-19 treatment you will usually be offered neutralising monoclonal antibodies (nMABs), such as sotrovimab (Xevudy®), before molnupiravir.

### Who can have molnupiravir?

You may be eligible for molnupiravir if **ALL** of these apply:

- you're over 18 years old
- you're in the high-risk group above
- you've had a positive PCR or LFT test for COVID-19 within the last 5 days
- you've had coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms within the last 5 days

### Who may not be able to have molnupiravir?

Molnupiravir is not suitable for some people. Tell your health care professional before starting to take this medicine if you:

- are pregnant, trying to get pregnant or breastfeeding
- have ever had an allergic reaction to molnupiravir or any other medicine

### How is molnupiravir taken?

Molnupiravir comes as 200 mg capsules. The dose is 800 mg (**four** capsules) twice a day (morning and evening) for 5 days.

It's important that you start taking molnupiravir within 5 days of getting coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms. Swallow the capsules whole with a glass of water. You can take them with or without food. Do not open, break or crush the capsules as this will release the medicine into your body too quickly.

Even if you start to feel better it's important you complete the course.

## Does molnupiravir have any side effects?

Like all medicines, molnupiravir can cause side effects in some people, although not everyone gets them.

Common side effects of molnupiravir (affect more than 1 in 100 people) include feeling dizzy and headaches. If you feel dizzy, do not drive, cycle or use tools or machinery. There are no known serious side effects with molnupiravir.

In rare cases, it's possible to have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to molnupiravir.

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. You can also report side effects directly via the [Coronavirus Yellow Card Reporting site](#) or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store. By reporting side effects, you are providing more information on the safety of this medicine.

## Molnupiravir and pregnancy, breast feeding and fertility

Molnupiravir is not recommended in pregnancy. It's important to use reliable contraception while you're taking molnupiravir and for 4 days after your last dose so you do not get pregnant.

The manufacturers advise that breastfeeding is not recommended during treatment with molnupiravir and for 4 days after your last dose. It's not known how much molnupiravir passes into breast milk.

Tell your healthcare professional if you are eligible for molnupiravir and you're pregnant or breastfeeding. They may be able to offer you other treatments.

It's not known whether taking molnupiravir will affect fertility in either men or women.