**COVID-19 Medicines**

**12 July 2022**

**What do COVID-19 medicines do?**

Medicines are available for eligible people who have COVID-19 to prevent them from getting so sick that they need to go to hospital. These medical treatments are also called early therapies, or antivirals. They can be life-saving.

These medicines do not replace vaccination. Vaccinations are the best protection from COVID-19.

For COVID-19 medicines to work at their best, most must be started within the first five days of COVID-19 symptoms. This is why it is important to get tested for COVID-19 as soon as you notice any symptoms, particularly if you are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill.

If you are eligible for these medicines, don’t wait for your symptoms to get worse. The sooner you take them, the better protected you will be from getting severely unwell.

**Who is eligible for COVID-19 medicines?**

Not everyone is eligible for COVID-19 medicines.

Most people can manage COVID-19 safely at home without medication.

COVID-19 medicines are only for people with COVID-19 who are more likely to need hospital care. This includes people 70 years or older and those with other illnesses.

Your GP, or a GP Respiratory Clinic, can assess your need for these medications.

People more likely to be eligible for COVID-19 medicines include those who:

* Are 70 years or older, even if they don’t have any symptoms or other health conditions
* Have a weakened immune system, disability or congenital heart disease
* Are 30 years or older, identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and have other health conditions
* Are 50 years or older and have other health conditions
* Are not up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccinations
* Live in an aged care residential facility or in a small rural or remote town.

For full details on eligibility criteria for different groups, search for ‘COVID-19 medicines’ on Victoria’s coronavirus website, or see <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covid-19-medicines>.

**How can I access COVID-19 medicines?**

If you think you are eligible for COVID-19 medicines, get tested as soon as you show any of the symptoms of COVID-19, no matter how mild they may be.

Doctors can only prescribe COVID-19 medicines if you have a positive test.

If you have COVID-19, have had less than five days of symptoms and think you are eligible or are 70 years or older and have no symptoms, immediately contact your GP, your local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, or GP Respiratory Clinic for further assessment. Let the clinic know you have COVID-19 and that you think you are eligible for COVID-19 medication.

GPs can prescribe LagevrioTM and PaxlovidTM (antiviral tablets) to adults and inhaled corticosteroids (puffers) to children and adults. They are also able to assess and refer you for treatment with other medicines, such as may be required during pregnancy. LagevrioTM and PaxlovidTM are on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) so will cost you a lot less money through a GP.

If you think you might be eligible for COVID-19 medicines, see your GP before you contract COVID-19 to discuss which medicine is best for you.

**How do I know which COVID-19 medicine is best for me?**

There are different factors (such as other health conditions or medicines that you are taking) that will affect how well each medicine would help you.

For example, LagevrioTM and PaxlovidTM are the most commonly prescribed COVID-19 medicines, but they are not suitable during pregnancy. Some COVID-19 medicines can only be accessed through hospitals through a referral from your GP or through the COVID Positive Pathways Program. These include PaxlovidTM for children and remdesivir (antiviral medicine delivered into the vein) for children and adults.

A GP can help determine which one is best for you.

**Can I discuss my eligibility before I get COVID-19?**

Yes.

In order for COVID-19 medicines to work at their best, most must be started within the first five days of COVID-19 symptoms. For people 70 years or older who test positive but do not have symptoms, treatment should start as soon as possible after a positive test.

If you think you might be eligible for COVID-19 medicines, see your GP before you contract COVID-19 to discuss which medicine will be best for you.

Doing this will mean that you will be able to start COVID-19 medicine as soon as possible if you develop COVID-19.