



COVID-19 medicines information for consumers

Several different types of medicines to treat COVID-19 have been approved for use in Western Australia. Examples include medicines that reduce or stop the virus from multiplying in human cells and medicines that treat the symptoms of COVID-19.

The Commonwealth Department of Health has authorised a limited number of COVID-19 treatments which are available through National Medical Stockpile to treat WA patients who have a positive COVID-19 test (either PCR test or rapid antigen test (RAT)). The medicines must be used within 5 days of symptoms starting and are for people who are at high risk of their COVID-19 disease getting worse which may require them to be admitted to hospital.

How can I access medicines to treat COVID-19?

Your GP or specialist doctor will determine if a COVID-19 medication will be helpful for you, and if so, your doctor can seek approval from an Infectious Disease Physician before it to be prescribed for you.

Why can't I get access to medicines to treat COVID-19?

There is a limited supply of medicines which can be used in WA to treat COVID-19. Before a doctor prescribes you this medication, they will check that it is the right medicine to help you and that it is safe for you to use.

These medicines must be started within 5 days of COVID-19 symptoms beginning and when your symptoms don't require you to be in hospital.

Why I am being given this medicine?

You may be prescribed a medicine to treat COVID-19 to help your body to overcome the infection and prevent you from getting seriously ill.

Do I still need to be vaccinated?

Yes, vaccination offers the best protection against COVID-19. Having a COVID-19 infection and being treated does not offer the same protection as vaccination.

What should I know before I use this medicine?

Check with your doctor before using a COVID-19 medicine. Let your doctor know about any medical conditions you have, if you are taking any prescribed medicine, non-prescription medicines or complementary medicines for example: vitamins, minerals, herbal or naturopathic medicines, if you have any allergies and the possibility of pregnancy or plans for pregnancy.

What if I am taking other medicines?

Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines, including any medicines, vitamins or supplements that you buy without a prescription from your pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop.

How is this medicine given?

Some COVID-19 medicines need to be given as a single dose infusion into the vein and should be given at a hospital by a health professional. Other medicines are in tablet or capsule form that are taken as a 5-day course and can be taken at home.

You doctor will advise you on how to take your medicine and if you are prescribed a course of treatment, what to do if you miss a dose of the medication.

Consent to use the medicine

A doctor or other healthcare professional will discuss the risks and benefits of using the medicine with you and provide you with a patient medication information sheet. You will need to fill out a form to say you consent to using the treatment. You have the right to change your mind at any time before you start the treatment.

If you are too sick to consent to treatment, either due to COVID-19 or another health condition, are under 18 years of age or have a cognitive impairment, a substitute decision maker can provide consent for you to receive the treatment.

An interpreter can be used to assist a patient in understanding the risks and benefits of the treatment.

Timing of medicine use

Some medicines must be started within specific timeframes of developing COVID-19 symptoms (within 5 days) to be effective, therefore it is important that you seek treatment for your symptoms as soon as possible.

Things to do

- Remind any doctor, dentist or pharmacist you visit that you have taken this medication.
- Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are taking, have recently taken or might take any other medicines before you receive the COVID-19 medicine.
- Seek medical attention if you think you may be having an allergic reaction.

Things not to do

- Do not stop taking your COVID-19 medicine before the full treatment of medicine is taken.
- Check restrictions for driving or use of machines while using the prescribed medication.

Storage considerations

- Where medicines are given to you in a healthcare facility, the health care professional looking after you will be responsible for storing the medicine.
- If you are storing the medicine at home, check if they need to be stored in a refrigerator and/or protected from heat, light or moisture.
- Ensure the medicine are stored so they cannot be reached by children.

Side effects

During treatment, you may be at risk of developing certain side effects, although not everybody gets them. You need to know what symptoms to look out for as some of the side effects can be serious.

Some medicines can cause allergic reactions which may be severe. If you develop symptoms of an allergic reaction, you must tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible. These include rash, swelling, becoming wheezy, coughing or having difficulty in breathing or suddenly feeling weak/lightheaded. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you notice anything else that may be making you feel unwell.

For more information, including what to do if you have any side effects, ask your doctor, pharmacist or the health professional who is prescribing this medicine.

Breastfeeding and pregnancy

Check with your doctor whether you should receive the medicine if you are pregnant, if think you could be pregnant, or intend to become pregnant.

Talk to your doctor if you are breastfeeding or intend to breastfeed before you use a new medicine.

Fertility

Check with your doctor to see if you need to use an alternative contraception while taking this medicine.

What should I do if my COVID-19 symptoms get worse?

Call your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns.

Call 000 immediately if you experience severe symptoms of COVID-19, such as:

- difficulty breathing
- severe chest pain
- feelings of disorientation or confusion
- loss of consciousness.

What should I do after I finish my treatment?

Treatment does not shorten your isolation time. You are still considered to be contagious while you are taking your treatment. Follow all Public Health guidelines for isolation. For information about isolation please refer to the Healthy WA website.

https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus/Quarantine-and-isolation

Where can I get more information about COVID-19 medicines?

Speak to your health practitioner who can provide you with more information or go to the to the HealthyWA website at COVID-19 (coronavirus) ([healthywa.wa.gov.au](https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au)).

If you have any questions about your COVID-19 medication, call your doctor or pharmacist.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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