

Eligibility for oral COVID-19 treatments

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee recommended changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) eligibility criteria of the oral treatments Lagevrio® (molnupiravir) and Paxlovid® (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) for First Nations people. This will take effect from 1 November 2022.

Antiviral treatments taken as capsules or tablets may help stop COVID-19 infection from becoming severe. Courses of these antiviral treatments need to be started as soon as possible after symptoms from COVID-19 begin.

People at higher risk of severe illness are eligible for antiviral treatments.

Senior Australians and First Nations people

If you test positive for COVID-19, you may be eligible for antiviral treatments if you are:

- 70 years of age or older, regardless of risk factors and with or without symptoms
- 50 years of age or older with **2** additional risk factors
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 30 years of age or older and with **1** additional risk factors.

Risk factors for these groups include:

- living in residential aged care
- living with disability with multiple conditions and/or frailty (but 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
- obesity or 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 or older

If you test positive for COVID-19 and are moderately to severely immunocompromised, you may be eligible for antiviral treatments.;

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.

How to get COVID-19 oral treatments

If you test positive, you should contact your doctor for advice about eligibility first.

If your doctor recommends oral antiviral treatments, you will need a prescription.

The medications are available at your local pharmacy with a prescription.

Your doctor can send the pharmacist your prescription electronically so the medications can be either collected by a friend or family member or delivered to your home.