



Medicines to treat Covid

Antiviral medicines can help you if you're at risk of becoming very sick with Covid. They reduce the amount of virus in your body, so you don't get as sick and you're less likely to go to hospital.

Many pharmacies provide antivirals without a prescription, or your usual healthcare provider can write you a prescription for a pharmacy to fill.

People eligible for free antiviral medicines

- Māori and Pacific people aged 50 years or older
- everyone aged 65 years or older
- anyone aged 50 years or older with fewer than two Covid vaccinations
- anyone with a severely weakened immune system
- anyone with Down syndrome
- anyone with sickle cell disease
- anyone previously in critical or high dependency hospital care from Covid
- anyone with a disability who is at high risk of severe illness from Covid
- anyone with frailty or vulnerability due to one or more severe health conditions
- anyone with 3 or more high-risk factors for severe illness from Covid

Visit **COVID19.health.nz** for the full eligibility criteria.

Be ready

You must start taking antivirals within 5 days of becoming sick with Covid.

Before you get sick, ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider if you are eligible for antivirals.

Have rapid antigen test (RAT) kits at home, so you can test yourself as soon as you start to feel sick.

Find a pharmacy that provides antivirals without a prescription at **Healthpoint.co.nz** or by asking your local pharmacy.

If you're feeling sick

Stay home, isolate and take a RAT. If you test positive, call your pharmacy or usual healthcare provider and ask for a phone appointment to talk about whether antivirals are right for you.

Getting the medicine

You can only get antiviral medicines from a pharmacy. Whānau or friends can pick up your medicine or it can be delivered for free – even if you live in a rural or remote place.

Oral antiviral medicines available

Paxlovid is 2 medicines (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) that you take together. You take Paxlovid tablets for 5 days.

Paxlovid can interact with some other medicines and treatments. To be safe, tell your healthcare provider about any medicines or treatments, herbal remedies, rongoā rākau (plant remedies), or supplements you are taking so they can decide if Paxlovid is right for you, make a plan for you to take Paxlovid safely, or recommend a different medicine.

Side effects

All medicines can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them.

The reported side effects for these medicines are usually mild and temporary.

The most common side effects of Paxlovid are mild and include changes to your sense of taste and a metallic or unpleasant taste in your mouth, nausea, vomiting, headache, and diarrhoea.

Some people experience aching muscles, muscle tenderness or weakness, and abdominal pain.

Allergic reactions

Serious allergic reactions are rare.

Tell your healthcare provider about known allergies.

Signs of an allergic reaction include skin rash; puffiness or swelling of the eyelids or around the eyes, face, lips, or tongue; chest tightness; and trouble breathing.

Call 111 immediately if you have swelling or trouble breathing.

Call your healthcare provider or Healthline on **0800 611 116** if you have any other signs of an allergic reaction.



Find out more

Visit the COVID-19 Health Hub at [COVID19.health.nz](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-services/health-hub)

Read about Paxlovid at [Healthify.nz](https://www.healthify.nz)

Call your local pharmacy or usual healthcare provider

Call Healthline on **0800 358 5453** for free Covid health advice