Allina Health ⚕

Outpatient Treatments for COVID-19

What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?

COVID-19 is the name of the infection caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. Coronavirus causes illnesses that affect your lungs making it hard to breathe. Some of these viruses spread easily from person to person.

Current symptoms reported for people with COVID-19 have included:

- fever
- cough
- trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- other symptoms include muscle aches, headache, sore throat, diarrhea, or loss of taste or smell.

Symptoms range from mild to severe.

What are the Current Outpatient Treatments for COVID-19?

There are currently two types of treatments available for mild to moderate symptoms:

- monoclonal antibody infusion therapy
- oral antivirals.

What are Monoclonal Antibodies?

Antibodies are proteins that your body makes to help fight off an illness. They can also provide immunity (protection from disease). Monoclonal antibodies are made in a lab and are similar to the antibodies your body makes.

What is Monoclonal Antibody Infusion Therapy?

Monoclonal antibody infusion therapy is used to treat a person who has COVID-19. The medicine used is called bebtelovimab.

Bebtelovimab is an "investigational" medicine. This means it is still being studied and not all of the risks are known at this time. Early research has shown that this medicine is safe and can reduce your risk of being admitted to the hospital.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved bebtelovimab for emergency use. This means it has met certain criteria (safety, performance and labeling) to be used when there are no other medicines available.

How is Monoclonal Antibody Infusion Therapy Given?

This treatment is given by infusion therapy. You receive the medicine through an intravenous (IV) catheter (thin tube) inserted into a vein in your arm.

The injection takes about 1 minute to be given. You will then be watched closely for any side effects for 1 hour.

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Who Can Have Monoclonal Antibody Infusion Therapy Treatment?

This treatment is only for people at increased risk of serious illness due to their age or health history. People with certain risk factors can have a more severe case of COVID-19.

To have this treatment, you need to:

- have tested positive for COVID-19
- have at least one risk factor for severe COVID-19
- have mild or moderate symptoms and do not need oxygen
- not be in the hospital
- have the infusion within 7 days of when your symptoms start
- be age 12 or older
- weigh at least 88 pounds.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, please talk with your health care provider about if this treatment is right for you.

How Do You Get Monoclonal Antibody Infusion Therapy Treatment?

Schedule a virtual or in-person visit with your primary care provider as soon as you have any symptoms to determine if you are eligible for this treatment.

If you are eligible, your primary care provider will add your information to the contact list to receive this treatment. You will receive a phone call if there is a dose available for you.

If Allina Health has not called you within 2 business days of being added to the list, you will not receive this treatment at Allina Health.

What Oral Antiviral Treatments are Available?

Oral antivirals (medicines taken by mouth) are used to treat a person who has COVID-19. Two oral antivirals are currently available:

- Paxlovid™ (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir)
- molnupiravir.

Are Oral Antivirals Effective Against the Omicron Variant?

Oral antivirals are believed to be effective against the Omicron variant.

Who Can Have Oral Antivirals?

To have this treatment, you need to:

- have tested positive for COVID-19
- have at least one risk factor for severe COVID-19
- have mild or moderate symptoms and do not need oxygen
- not be in the hospital
- have the treatment within 5 days of when your symptoms start
- be age 18 and older for molnupiravir or age 12 and older and weigh at least 88 pounds for Paxlovid.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, please talk with your health care provider about if this treatment is right for you.

How Do You Get Oral Antivirals?

You should take an at-home COVID-19 diagnostic test as soon as you have any symptoms.

If you test positive for COVID-19, schedule a virtual or in-person visit with your primary care provider to determine if you are eligible for this treatment.

Please note: You may also need additional lab tests before having this treatment.

What Should You Tell Your Health Care Provider?

Before having any treatment, it is important to tell your health care provider if you:

- have a serious illness
- have any allergies
- are taking any medicines (including all prescription, over-the-counter, vitamins, herbal or natural products)
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

What are the Benefits?

These treatments for COVID-19 will help:

- keep you feeling well
- lower your risk of getting worse from COVID-19 or being admitted to the hospital
- shorten the length of time your symptoms last.

What are the Possible Side Effects?

All of these treatments could cause side effects, which can differ from person to person. They are still being studied and there could be other side effects that have not been reported.

Common side effects include:

- nausea (upset stomach)
- vomiting (throwing up)
- diarrhea
- headache
- dizziness or lightheadedness
- itching.

At the infusion site, you may have pain, bleeding, bruising, soreness, swelling and possible infection.

Tell your health care provider right away if you have any side effect that bothers you or does not go away.

Some serious side effects such as an allergic reaction are possible, but not as common. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include fever, chills, nausea, headache, shortness of breath, low blood pressure, wheezing, swelling of your lips, face, or throat, rash including hives, itching, muscle aches, and dizziness.

If you have an allergic reaction, call 911 or have someone drive you to the Emergency Department right away. Be sure to tell medical staff that you have tested positive for COVID-19. After you have received care, tell your health care provider about your side effects.

Will Your Insurance Cover the Cost of These Treatments?

Your insurance provider will be billed for part of the treatment (giving you the medicine). Call your insurance provider to see how much you will need to pay. If you do not have insurance or have any questions, talk with your health care provider.