

Frequently Asked Questions From Patients About COVID Treatments



IDSA
Infectious Diseases Society of America

Should I ask a doctor for medicine to treat my COVID infection?

Even if you're vaccinated, you're more likely than others to get very sick from COVID and need hospital care if any of these apply to you:

- You're 50 or older
- You have one or more particular health issues (see below)
- You have a compromised or weakened immune system

It's important that you talk to a doctor right away.

COVID treatment is available to help keep your illness from getting worse, but it must begin within days of when your symptoms start.

So, don't wait.

What are some of the health issues that increase my risk of getting very sick or needing hospital care for COVID?

Some of the health issues include:

- Chronic heart, lung, or kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Being overweight
- HIV infection
- Substance use disorders
- Severe asthma

For a full list of health issues, go to [cdc.gov/covidtreatment](https://www.cdc.gov/covidtreatment)

Everyone 50 or older, even those without underlying health issues, should talk to a doctor if they have COVID symptoms. Older age is the biggest risk factor for COVID complications.

What if my symptoms are mild? Do I still need to be treated for COVID?

If you're at increased risk of getting very sick from COVID because of your age or an underlying health issue, it's important to talk to a doctor as soon as you have COVID symptoms.

You may need treatment regardless of how mild your symptoms are. To work well, treatment must begin within days of when your symptoms start.

So, talk to a doctor right away.

What kinds of treatments are available to me?

To help prevent your COVID illness from getting worse, your doctor could prescribe you an antiviral medication.

Antivirals work to stop the COVID virus from multiplying and spreading in your body.

An antiviral medication can be pills for you to swallow. It can also be an IV infusion, or drip, in which the medicine is delivered slowly into a vein with a needle.

Your doctor will determine whether treatment is right for you and which one will be best for you.

Learn more about authorized or approved treatments for COVID at [cdc.gov/covidtreatment](https://www.cdc.gov/covidtreatment)

Can I have side effects from COVID treatments?

Some—but not all—patients experience side effects from COVID treatments. The most common side effects include:

- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Altered sense of taste
- Muscle or abdominal discomfort or pain
- Higher blood pressure than usual
- Feeling generally unwell

Serious allergic reactions are possible but rare. Signs of an allergic reaction include:

- Hives
- Trouble swallowing or breathing
- Swollen mouth, lips, or face
- Skin rash
- Throat tightness or hoarseness

If you experience any of these reactions, stop taking your medicine and call the doctor who prescribed your medication or 911 right away.

Should I get treated for COVID if I'm pregnant or breastfeeding?

Researchers are still studying the safety of available COVID treatments in patients who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Talk to a doctor about whether COVID treatment is right for you.

If I can't get a prescription medicine for the treatment of COVID, what should I do to take care of myself?

Your doctor will explain to you how you can take care of yourself at home, based on your risks and other health issues.

In general, people with COVID can get relief for some symptoms, such as fever and pain, by:

- Taking over-the-counter medicines
- Drinking plenty of fluids
- Getting rest

It's important to protect others by staying at home and to protect people in your home by staying in one room (if possible) and wearing a well-fitting mask around them for at least 10 days after your symptoms start.

Ask your doctor for more detailed advice about taking care of yourself and how to protect others if you have COVID.

