

March 23, 2022

PAXLOVID = nirmatrelvir + ritonavir (an antiviral medication) (a medicine to boost the effect of nirmatrelvir)		
WHAT: May prevent symptoms of COVID-19 from getting worse and may reduce the chance you will need to go to the hospital for COVID-19.	WHO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For adults who tested positive for COVID-19 AND • Have mild to moderate symptoms AND • Are at higher risk of severe disease and needing hospital care due to COVID-19. 	HOW: 3 pills* (2 tablets of nirmatrelvir and 1 tablet of ritonavir) taken orally (by mouth), twice a day for 5 days. Take all 3 morning tablets at the same time, and all 3 evening tablets at the same time.

*people with chronic kidney disease may have a different dose prescribed (1 tablet of nirmatrelvir and 1 tablet of ritonavir=2 tablets).

What is it?

- PAXLOVID (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir) is the first at-home prescription medication approved for use by Health Canada for COVID-19. It must be taken within 5 days of when symptoms start.
- **PAXLOVID is a set of two medications that are taken together to treat COVID-19.** It may prevent COVID-19 symptoms from getting worse in people with mild to moderate symptoms who are at higher risk of needing hospital care.

How does it work?

- PAXLOVID contains two medicines that work together, called nirmatrelvir and ritonavir. Nirmatrelvir is an antiviral medicine, which means it can help your body fight the virus infection. It may stop the virus from multiplying in your body. Ritonavir helps to boost the effect of nirmatrelvir.

Who can it help?

- PAXLOVID can be used to treat **adults 18 years and older who are at higher risk of severe illness** and who may need to go to the hospital for COVID-19. This includes people who are:
 - Immunocompromised
 - clinically extremely vulnerable
 - 70 years or older with three or more chronic conditions
 - 70 years and older and self-identify as Indigenous
 - unvaccinated or have not received a third/booster dose **and**
 - have three or more chronic conditions
 - 50 years or older
 - Indigenous

Chronic conditions can include things like: diabetes, chronic heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), chronic kidney disease and chronic cancers.

- PAXLOVID is not helpful for people who are already in the hospital and experiencing severe symptoms such as requiring oxygen support for breathing.
- PAXLOVID does not prevent people from getting COVID-19 before or after an exposure. Vaccination is still recommended to reduce the risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19.

How is it taken?

- PAXLOVID needs to be **taken within 5 days** since the start of COVID-19 symptoms. It comes pre-packaged with tablets for a morning dose and an evening dose:
 - **Each dose = 2 tablets of nirmatrelvir 150mg (pink tablets) and 1 tablet of ritonavir 100mg (white tablet) = total of 3 tablets.**
 - People with chronic kidney disease may have a different dose prescribed (1 tablet of nirmatrelvir and 1 tablet of ritonavir = 2 tablets).
 - You must take all the morning tablets at the same time and all the evening tablets at the same time, for the full 5 days.
 - Always take PAXLOVID exactly as your care provider has told you to.
- If you miss taking your dose and it is **within 8 hours** of the time it is usually taken, take it as soon as you remember. If it has been **more than 8 hours**, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at your regular time. Do not take 2 doses of PAXLOVID at the same time.

What are the possible side effects?

- Some people may experience diarrhea, a bad taste in the mouth, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle aches, or increased blood pressure.
- If you have a symptom or side effect that becomes bad enough to interfere with your daily activities, tell your care provider or call 8-1-1 and tell them you are taking this medication.
- Tell your care provider right away or call 9-1-1 if you get any symptoms of an allergic reaction such as difficulty breathing, chest tightness, fall or increase in blood pressure, swelling of your face, throat irritation, rash with hives, itching or an itchy rash.
- It is possible that there may be some unknown side effects. Health Canada is continuing to monitor this new treatment.

What are the precautions?

- There are many medicines and some herbals supplements that cannot be taken with PAXLOVID. A doctor or pharmacist will review your medications before prescribing PAXLOVID.
- **Ensure your care provider has an up to date and complete list of all medicines you are taking.** Let them know before taking any new medications while taking PAXLOVID.
- You shouldn't take PAXLOVID if you are allergic to any of the ingredients in PAXLOVID.
- Discuss with your care provider if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or using contraception.

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

- If you have difficulty breathing, have chest pain, can't drink, feel very sick, feel confused, or experience any loss of consciousness, **go to an urgent care clinic, emergency department, or call 9-1-1.**

COVID-19 Treatment

Patient Information

- For questions about COVID-19 symptoms, call 8-1-1 or your care provider or an urgent care centre.

This treatment does not change how long you need to isolate. It is important you continue to follow the guidance given to you at the time of your positive test.

For more information, visit [BCCDC](https://bccdc.ca/covid19treatments) at bccdc.ca/covid19treatments