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COVID-19 Treatments: Key Messages for Healthcare Providers

COVID-19 trends are [on the rise in North Carolina](#). Staying up to date with vaccines and timely access to treatment are the best ways to reduce hospitalization and death due to the illness. This document provides [key treatment messages](#), information about [product accessibility](#) and an [overview of treatment options](#) to healthcare providers for outpatient treatment of COVID-19.

Background/Key Messages:

- **COVID-19 treatments are safe, effective, and widely available.**
 - Scientific evidence suggests that using antiviral treatments reduces the risk of hospitalization and death for those at risk of severe COVID-19.
 - [Preliminary data](#) indicates treatment is associated with reduced risk of Long-COVID.
 - All currently authorized and approved treatments are expected to retain effectiveness against currently circulating variants.
 - There are no supply constraints limiting providers' ability to prescribe treatment.
- **A large proportion of the North Carolina population is considered high risk based on age or underlying conditions.**
 - Individuals who are likely to get very sick from COVID-19 include older adults (age 50 or greater), those who are unvaccinated, and those with underlying conditions including, but not limited to, compromised immune system, heart disease, overweight or obesity (BMI 25 or greater), asthma, diabetes, or depression. More information on who is considered high risk is available on the [CDC website](#).
 - Providers should discuss a [COVID-19 Plan](#) in advance with high-risk and immunocompromised patients in case of infection.
 - Anyone with a COVID-19 diagnosis over the age of 50 and/or with a high-risk health condition should be evaluated and prescribed COVID-19 treatment as clinically appropriate.
- **Treatment must be started early, even if symptoms are mild.**
 - Oral antivirals for COVID-19 (Paxlovid and Lagevrio) must be started within 5 days of symptom onset.
 - IV Veklury must be started within 7 days of symptom onset.

How to Provide COVID-19 Treatment to Your Patients:

Oral Antivirals (Paxlovid and Lagevrio)

The oral antivirals Paxlovid and Lagevrio are currently being distributed for free by the US Government.

- Any prescribing provider in North Carolina can **send a prescription for oral antiviral drugs to the nearest pharmacy** that has drug in stock.
 - Utilize the state's [Treatment Finder](#) to find the nearest pharmacy with drug in stock.
 - Pharmacies can register with the state to receive allocations of oral antivirals for dispensing by completing the state's [COVID-19 Therapeutics Site Registration Form](#).
- Providers can **become a Test to Treat Location** to provide individuals a more effective way to rapidly access COVID-19 treatment. Prescribing providers in NC have the option to prescribe and dispense oral antivirals directly from their offices. More information about Test to Treat requirements and registration information is outlined on this [Test to Treat Overview](#).
- **Providers with limited capacity to treat COVID-19 patients, especially those who are under or uninsured**, may refer their patients to eMed's [Home Test to Treat Program](#), a FREE nationwide telemedicine program in partnership with the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

IV Veklury

Veklury is available in hospitals and infusion centers statewide through standard commercial channels.

- Non-hospitals can contact AmerisourceBergen Specialty Distribution or Cardinal Specialty for ordering:
 - **AmerisourceBergen Specialty: 1-800-746-6273 or C19therapies@AmerisourceBergen.com**
 - **Cardinal Specialty: 1-855-855-0708 or GMB-SPD-CSORDERENTRY@cardinalhealth.com**
- The Federal [COVID-19 Therapeutics Locator](#) now includes Veklury for outpatient administration through voluntary opt in by treatment sites. Treatment sites that currently administer Veklury in the outpatient setting are encouraged to follow [this link](#) so their site can be found on the Federal COVID-19 Therapeutics Locator.

Overview of Treatment Options:

Paxlovid

Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir) is the preferred oral antiviral per the [NIH COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#).

- Paxlovid is *approved* for treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in high-risk patients ages 18 and older. The FDA has issued *Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)* for treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in high-risk patients ages 12 and older.
- Paxlovid is taken twice daily for 5 days.
 - Dose adjustment is required for moderate renal impairment (eGFR >30 to <60 mL/min).

- Paxlovid is not recommended in patients with severe renal (eGFR <30 mL/min) or hepatic impairment (Child-Pugh Class C).
- For all eligible patients, **drug interactions need to be assessed** (helpful resource: [Paxlovid Drug Interaction Checker](#)).

Paxlovid Clinical Resources:

- [Paxlovid Prescribing Information](#)
- [Healthcare Provider Fact Sheet](#)
- [Patient Fact Sheet \(English\)](#) | [\(Spanish\)](#)
- [Paxlovid Drug Interaction Checker](#) (Pfizer)
- [Paxlovid Eligibility Screening Checklist Tool](#) (FDA)
- [Paxlovid – Pfizer Website](#)

Veklury

Veklury (remdesivir) IV is a preferred treatment option for outpatients in cases where Paxlovid is not appropriate.

- Veklury is approved by the FDA for treatment of COVID-19 in adult and pediatric patients (aged 28 days and older weighing at least 3 kg) who are hospitalized, or not hospitalized and have mild-to-moderate COVID-19 and are at high risk for progression to severe disease.
- Veklury IV is infused once daily for 3 days in the outpatient setting.
 - The FDA recently approved Veklury for use in COVID-19 patients with severe renal impairment, **including those on dialysis**.

Veklury Clinical Resources:

- [Veklury Prescribing Information](#)
- [Veklury – Gilead Website](#)

Lagevrio

Lagevrio (molnupiravir) is an alternative oral antiviral for patients for whom neither Paxlovid nor Veklury are clinically appropriate or feasible.

- Lagevrio is authorized for treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 for patients ages 18 years and older who are at high risk for progression to severe disease.
- Lagevrio is taken twice daily for 5 days.
 - Lagevrio is **not recommended during pregnancy**.
 - There are no known drug interactions.

Lagevrio Clinical Resources:

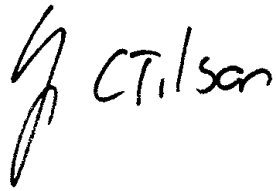
- [Healthcare Provider Fact Sheet](#)
- [Patient Fact Sheet \(English\)](#) | [\(Spanish\)](#)
- [Lagevrio – Merck Website](#)

Additional Resources:

- [National Institute of Health \(NIH\) COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#)
- [COVID-19 Outpatient Clinical Decision Aid](#)
- [Side-by-Side Overview of Therapeutics Authorized or Approved for Treatment of Mild-to-Moderate COVID-19](#)
- [NCDHHS Therapeutics Information for Providers](#)

For any questions related to COVID-19 Therapeutics, contact us at
covid19testingandtreatments@dhhs.nc.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Cuervo Tilson". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "E" and a cursive-style name.

Elizabeth Cuervo Tilson, MD, MPH
State Health Director
Chief Medical Officer
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services