

COVID-19: new treatments

Vaccines remain the primary defence against COVID-19, but today (8th December) the UK Government has announced that it has also made available other new treatment options for COVID-19 for eligible groups of patients.

These new treatments are used in the earliest stages of infection and often taken at home. These treatments should be administered as soon as possible after a confirmed COVID-19 positive PCR test has been received.

We are the first country in the world to begin rolling out oral antivirals in the community, which we are doing through a new national study called PANORAMIC which opened today. We strongly encourage eligible patients to sign up for the PANORAMIC national study to help the UK gather the data on how antivirals work in a predominantly vaccinated population. This will help the NHS to develop plans for making antivirals available to patients who would benefit from them the most.

Patients are eligible for PANORAMIC if they:

- Have received a PCR positive test for COVID-19.
- Feel unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 that started in the last 5 days; and
- Are aged 50+, or 18-49 years old with an underlying medical condition that can increase chance of having severe COVID-19.

The health conditions that make people eligible for the national study include:

- Chronic respiratory disease (including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis and asthma requiring at least daily use of preventative and/or reliever medication)
- Chronic heart or vascular disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Chronic neurological disease (including dementia, stroke, epilepsy)
- Severe and profound learning disability
- Down's syndrome
- Diabetes mellitus
- Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment (e.g. sickle cell, HIV, cancer, chemotherapy)
- Solid organ, bone marrow, or stem cell transplant recipients
- Morbid obesity (BMI >35)
- Severe mental illness
- Care home resident
- Considered by recruiting clinician to be clinically vulnerable

Eligible patients will be contacted by the study team or a local healthcare professional (e.g. a GP or a research nurse) to consider enrolling in the study, or they can sign up directly at the study website: www.panoramictrial.org.

In addition, patients in the highest risk group from COVID-19 who receive a positive PCR test will be able to access new COVID treatments directly **from 16th December**. Eligible patients will be informed via a 'pre-notification' letter or email if they have a condition that may make them eligible to receive these treatments directly, should they test positive. These patients will receive a PCR test to keep at home from NHS Test and Trace to support rapid testing so treatments can be given as soon as possible after symptoms begin.

If an eligible patient becomes COVID positive, they will be contacted by a clinician from one of the new COVID Medicines Delivery Units (CMDU) by telephone to discuss treatment

options. If people feel they may be eligible, but haven't received a letter, they can contact their GP or consultant to discuss whether they should be in the highest risk group. They will make an assessment of any conditions they may have, and if they should be eligible, they will issue them with a copy of the letter to provide further information on next steps.

The health conditions that make people eligible for treatments outside of the national study include:

- Down's syndrome and other genetic disorders with reduced immune response
- Sickle cell disease
- Chemotherapy and radiotherapy patients, and those with a solid cancer
- Patients with a haematologic malignancy
- Renal disease
- Liver disease
- Certain inflammatory disorders
- Patients with a primary immune deficiency
- HIV/AIDs
- Organ transplant recipients
- Rare neurological conditions: Multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease, myasthenia gravis and Huntingdon's disease

Following a clinical assessment by a clinician from a COVID Medicines Delivery Unit (CMDU) the following types of treatments may be offered to patients:

Monoclonal antibodies

Ronapreve is a monoclonal antibody therapy that the MHRA authorised as a COVID-19 treatment on 20 August 2021, it is currently available to hospitalised COVID-19 patients. This treatment will now also be available to people in community settings as one of a range of treatments offered to eligible patients.

This treatment is administered as a single intravenous infusion by a medical professional.

UKHSA have noted that Omicron could have an impact on neutralising monoclonal antibody treatments (such as Ronapreve) – although there is no confirmatory lab data for this yet. Work is currently ongoing to assess effectiveness. Ronapreve will continue to be available this winter, but the NHS will keep the position under review.

Oral antiviral

Lagevrio (also known as molnupiravir) is an antiviral oral capsule that was approved by the UK's medicines regulator (MHRA) on 4th November 2021. This is being made available to those eligible through the PANORAMIC national study from 8th December 2021. We are rolling out a nationwide study before considering using this treatment widely in the UK because we need further data on how this treatment works in a predominantly vaccinated population, to inform wider future access.

This treatment should be taken within 5 days of symptoms beginning. The full course should be taken and patients should follow the prescribing clinicians advice.