FAQs for Long Term Care and Designated Supportive Living Residents

Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) Treatment

Alberta Health Services (AHS) is offering a new medication, nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) to Albertans with mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms who are at greatest risk of developing severe COVID-19 infection. Eligible patients will be able to receive this oral medication through their LTC/DSL site.

What is Paxlovid™?
Paxlovid™ is a new anti-viral medication that is made up of two medications, nirmatrelvir and ritonavir, that are taken in pill form together by mouth twice a day for five days.

Has Paxlovid™ been approved for use?
Health Canada has authorized the use of Paxlovid™ to treat mild to moderate COVID-19 infection that has been confirmed by lab testing. Learn more on the Health Canada Consumer Information Summary for Paxlovid™.

What is Paxlovid™ used for?
Paxlovid™ is used to prevent mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19 from getting worse in people who have a high risk of needing to go to the hospital for COVID-19.

Who can get Paxlovid™?
In Alberta, Paxlovid™ is approved for adults who:
- have a positive AHS-confirmed test for COVID-19
- have mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms
- can receive the medication within five days from when symptoms started

The medication will be given to patients who are most likely to develop severe COVID-19 illness and are at a greater risk of being hospitalized. This includes residents of long-term care, Designated Supportive Living 4 and 4D.

Paxlovid™ cannot be used for residents who are on certain medications. As part of the screening process for eligibility, your medications, including any over-the-counter and herbal medications, will be reviewed.

Why is this medication limited to people with COVID symptoms for less than five days?
Paxlovid™ has been shown to work best when it is used early, before the virus has moved beyond a mild to moderate infection.

How will eligible patients be identified and informed?
As a resident of a Long-Term Care or Designated Supportive Living facility you will be screened for eligibility should you develop symptoms and test positive for COVID-19.

Alberta Health Services

Why is Paxlovid™ not being offered to residents of all Designated Supportive Living sites?
Paxlovid™ will be offered to patients who are most at risk for developing severe COVID-19 illness and requiring hospitalization. Information we have available identifies this to include residents of Long-Term Care, Designated Supportive Living 4 and 4D who have the highest risks based on their general health. Residents of these settings also have on-site health care which allows for monitoring and supervision required.

How is Paxlovid™ administered?
Paxlovid™ is taken in pill form. One dose consists of three pills that are taken twice a day over five days. Patients with a reduced kidney function may have their dose reduced to two pills twice a day for five days.

Is there a charge for my Paxlovid™ prescription?
No. Paxlovid™ is covered and paid for by Alberta Health. If you are eligible for the treatment, you can have your prescription filled for free.

How will I be monitored after receiving Paxlovid™?
If you take Paxlovid™, you will be monitored for any side effects at your residence.

What are the possible side effects of Paxlovid™?
According to Health Canada, reported side effects include:
- altered sense of taste
- diarrhea
- muscle pain
- vomiting
- high blood pressure
- headache

Paxlovid™ is relatively new, so you may experience unexpected side effects. Please report any side effects to your family doctor. For more details on avoiding potential side effects and what to watch for, see the Health Canada Consumer Information Summary.

Can I get vaccinated for COVID-19 after I take Paxlovid™?

Yes. Paxlovid™ is not a replacement for immunization against COVID-19. **Albertans are strongly encouraged to get fully immunized against COVID-19.** If you receive Paxlovid™, you should wait until you are fully recovered from the infection before getting a COVID-19 vaccine to ensure you get maximum benefit from the vaccine.

What if I test positive for COVID-19 again? Can I take Paxlovid™ more than once? If you test positive for a second COVID-19 infection, Paxlovid™ can be prescribed again, but you are encouraged to get vaccinated against COVID-19 90 days after you are no longer symptomatic.

Why is Alberta using this drug?
Paxlovid™ can prevent mild to moderate COVID-19 from becoming more severe and requiring people to be admitted to the hospital. Paxlovid™ can be especially helpful for patients who might otherwise have a high risk of being hospitalized or developing more serious health problems due to COVID-19.

Alberta Health Services

Is Paxlovid™ being used elsewhere?

Yes. Outpatient treatments like Paxlovid™ are currently being used in many areas of Canada. AHS is working with other health authorities in Canada to learn how they are using this treatment.

Why hasn't this drug been considered before now?

Paxlovid™ is a new treatment for COVID-19 that was only recently approved by Health Canada. For more information, see the Health Canada Consumer Information Summary.

For more information on the AHS rollout of all outpatient COVID-19 treatments, visit ahs.ca/covidopt.