



COVID-19 Oral Antiviral Treatments in Residential Aged Care Homes

5 October 2022

New Standard of Care to guide best practice

On 14 July 2022, the Chief Medical Officer wrote to residential aged care providers with a statement on the [standard of care](#) required in the administration and use of COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments in residential aged care homes.

The statement guides best practice in preparing for and ensuring prompt administration of COVID-19 oral antivirals to ensure the health and safety of residents. Providers should use the statement to inform the clinical governance in aged care home/s.

Eligibility

Eligibility for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listed treatments, Lagevrio and Paxlovid, was expanded in July 2022.

Residents aged 70 years or over, who test positive to COVID-19 are eligible for oral antiviral treatments regardless of whether they have symptoms or risk factors.

People 50 years of age or older, or those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, aged 30 years or older, with two additional risk factors may also be eligible for the oral treatments.

Risk factors include:

- **living in residential aged care**
- living with disability with multiple conditions and/or frailty (but not limited to living in supported accommodation)
- neurological conditions like stroke or dementia and demyelinating conditions e.g. multiple sclerosis, Guillain-Barre Syndrome
- chronic respiratory conditions including COPD, moderate or severe asthma
- obesity or diabetes (type I or II requiring medication)
- heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies
- kidney failure or cirrhosis
- living remotely with reduced access to higher level healthcare.

Find out more about eligibility and risk factors: www.health.gov.au/oral-treatments.

Accessing oral treatments – working with primary care providers

Oral antiviral treatments must be prescribed by an authorised prescriber e.g., a GP or nurse practitioner.

Having identified pathways to authorised prescribers especially after hours, will help you access the treatments for eligible residents more quickly.

Advanced identification of eligibility and consent can be useful if a resident's regular GP is unavailable but a discussion with the treating clinician has been previously documented in a clinical management system.

A prescription cannot be issued without a positive, verified COVID-19 RAT or PCR test.

A subsequent course of treatment may be prescribed to a resident if they become reinfected with COVID-19 in the future.

Telehealth services are available if a GP cannot visit a resident at the home. From 19 July 2022, new temporary telehealth items have been introduced that provide for longer phone consultations for people who have received a positive COVID-19 test (RAT or PCR).

Medicare benefits will recognise when a longer medical assessment by phone is required to assess whether antivirals should be prescribed, equivalent to face-to-face and video services of the same duration.

For residents who do not have a regular GP or cannot get an appointment quickly, you can contact HealthDirect's [Service Finder](#) or the National Coronavirus Helpline 24/7 on 1800 020 080.

Additionally, your local **Primary Health Network** may be able to assist to connect you with a local prescriber.

Pharmacy supply of oral treatments

As the Government's replacement of Lagevrio has concluded, providers should ensure a dispensing pathway is established with a local community pharmacy to facilitate timely access to medications with a prescription.

The Government is actively encouraging pharmacists to stock these medicines and wholesalers must supply both Paxlovid and Lagevrio to community pharmacies within 24 hours of order cut-off times, including to rural and remote pharmacies under the [Community Service Obligation Funding Pool](#) scheme.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia's [Find a Pharmacy service](#) enables you to search for pharmacies near you that are holding stock of the oral treatments

If you are unable to access supply through your local community pharmacies you can try local hospitals or public health units or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. As a last resort, please contact your Commonwealth case management team for assistance.

Resources

For residents and families

Information is available to assist residents and their families make informed decisions regarding [oral antiviral treatments](#), including in [other languages](#) and at [NPS Medicinewise](#).

For staff

Resources for clinical staff and primary care providers is also available on the [Department of Health and Aged Care's website](#), [Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme](#) and the [RACGP](#) which includes a [prescribing workflow](#).

Information on Lagevrio for people with difficulty swallowing capsules and an option for an oral solution if deemed clinically necessary is at [NPS MedicineWise](#).