April 25, 2022

The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is issuing this health alert to provide the healthcare community with information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the use of treatments for outpatients with mild to moderate COVID-19 who are at increased risk for severe outcomes of COVID-19.

Summary

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is issuing this Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory to update healthcare providers, public health departments, and the public about the availability and use of recommended therapies for COVID-19 and to advise against using unproven treatments that have known or potential harms for outpatients with mild to moderate COVID-19. For patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 who are not hospitalized and who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes, several treatment options, including antiviral medications and monoclonal antibodies, are now widely available and accessible.

Systemic corticosteroids are not recommended to treat patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 who do not require supplemental oxygen; patients who are receiving dexamethasone or another corticosteroid for other indications should continue therapy for their underlying conditions as directed by their healthcare providers. Antibacterial therapy is not recommended for the treatment of COVID-19 in the absence of another indication.

Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccination is still the best way to prevent serious outcomes of COVID-19, including severe disease, hospitalization, and death.

Background

Early outpatient treatment of COVID-19 can avert serious, potentially life-threatening illness and reduce burden on the healthcare system. CDC issued

a [HAN Health Advisory on December 31, 2021](#) to address using therapeutics in the outpatient setting for people with COVID-19. At that time, Omicron cases were increasing rapidly in the United States and some COVID-19 therapeutics were in short supply. Now antivirals for COVID-19 are widely available and can be accessed with a provider prescription at pharmacies nationwide and at [Test to Treat](#) locations.

Data from CDC (1, 2) (highlighted in a [February 13, 2021 CDC/](#)Infectious Diseases Society of America COVID-19 Clinical Call) and the Food and Drug Administration (3) suggest that there has been increasing use of systemic corticosteroids and antibiotics to treat outpatients with COVID-19. However, these drugs can cause harm and provide no demonstrated benefit in patients with COVID-19 with no supplemental oxygen requirement or bacterial coinfection. Short courses of systemic corticosteroids have been associated with adverse events such as hyperglycemia, gastrointestinal bleeding, psychosis, infections, and longer-term effects (4–7).

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) provides [COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#). The guidelines panel provides treatment options and recommends against using systemic corticosteroids to treat patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 who do not require supplemental oxygen. Patients who are receiving dexamethasone or another corticosteroid for other indications should continue therapy for their underlying conditions as directed by their healthcare providers. Systemic corticosteroids are recommended for hospitalized patients with COVID-19 who require supplemental oxygen or higher-level respiratory support.

The guidelines panel also recommends against using antibacterial therapy for COVID-19 in the absence of another indication. Antibacterial drugs have no benefit in treating viral infections and can cause harm.

View the **Therapeutic Management of Nonhospitalized Adults with COVID-19 (from** [NIH COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#)**, last updated: April 8, 2022)**

Recommendations

For Health Care Providers

1.   Obtain updated information on appropriate use of clinically indicated therapeutics through [NIH's COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#).
2.   Prescribe **COVID-19 therapeutics** for patients when clinically indicated.

- There are considerable differences in efficacy, risk profiles, and use restrictions between the two oral antivirals. Healthcare providers need to be familiar with these distinctions to make clinical decisions and inform patients. In addition, initiating treatment with these oral antivirals must begin within five days of symptom onset to maintain product efficacy.
- Please see [NIH's COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#) for important therapeutic considerations, such as the potential for significant drug-drug interactions with ritonavir-boosted nirmatrelvir ([Paxlovid](#)) and dosing regimens for patients with renal impairment.

1.   Obtain information on **access to outpatient COVID-19 treatments**, including pharmacies where antivirals for COVID-19 are distributed and [Test to Treat](#) locations. Providers who have questions about treatment or the Test to Treat program should email[OEMS@delaware.gov](#).

1.   Do not use **dexamethasone and other systemic corticosteroids** to treat patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 who do not require hospitalization or supplemental oxygen; these drugs have no proven benefit in these patients and can cause harm.
2.   Do not use **antibacterial therapy** to treat COVID-19 in the absence of another indication; these drugs have no benefit for treating viral infections and can cause harm.
3.   To prevent serious outcomes of COVID-19, including severe disease, hospitalization, and death, encourage all patients to remain [up to date](#) **with COVID-19 vaccination**.

People who are immunocompromised or severely allergic to COVID-19 vaccines may receive tixagevimab co-packaged with cilgavimab ([Evusheld](#)), a **long-acting combination monoclonal antibody therapy** given by intramuscular injection for pre-exposure prophylaxis of COVID-19. To find Evusheld distribution locations, providers can go to the [COVID-19 Therapeutics Locator](#), call the support line at 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 888-720-7489), or contact their individual state or territorial health planners.

For More Information

- [CDC COVID-19 Treatment website](#)
- [NIH COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#)
- [NIH COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines: Therapeutic Management of Nonhospitalized Adults with COVID-19](#)
- [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC](#)
- [NIH COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines: Prevention of SARS-CoV-2 Infection](#)
- [Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness & Response (ASPR) Test to Treat website](#)
- [U.S. Food and Drug Administration COVID-19 Therapeutic Product Emergency Use Authorizations](#)
- [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#)