COVID-19 Health Basics

How is COVID-19 treated?

People with mild to moderate COVID can usually manage their symptoms with supportive care at home, similar to care for the flu. This includes taking over-the-counter medications for fever, cough and pain, drinking plenty of fluids and getting adequate rest.

In more severe cases, people with COVID may require hospitalization for advanced care. This may involve breathing supplemental oxygen or, if patients can't breathe on their own, the use of a ventilator machine.

There are three approved antiviral medications for COVID, available by prescription: nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid), remdesivir (Veklury) and molnupiravir (Lagevrio). Paxlovid is indicated for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID in adults who are at risk for progression to severe disease. Remdesivir is indicated for hospitalized patients and people with mild to moderate illness who are at risk for progression. Molnupiravir is indicated for adults with mild to moderate illness who are at risk for progression and are unable to use other medications. To be effective, treatment must be started within a few days after symptoms first appear.

Monoclonal antibodies were previously used to treat COVID and prevent progression to severe illness, but the virus developed resistance, and they are no longer effective. Researchers are working to develop new antibodies for COVID prevention and treatment. Some immunocompromised people may benefit from convalescent plasma, which contains natural antibodies from people who have recovered from COVID.

The Infectious Diseases Society of America offers Guidelines on the Treatment and Management of Patients with COVID-19

Last Reviewed: September 15, 2023

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.