May 13, 2022

Early COVID-19 Treatment for People with High-Risk Conditions

There are medicines available to prevent severe illness or disease if you start to get sick with COVID-19. The medicines must be given as soon as possible BEFORE people are sick enough to need to go to the hospital.

Treatments must be given as soon as possible after symptoms start to be effective. Get tested immediately if you feel COVID-19 symptoms so you can talk to a provider about treatment options: Pills must be started within 5 days from when symptoms started and the IV treatment must be started within 7 days.

People with certain health conditions are at high risk to get severely ill or hospitalized from COVID-19. If you start to feel sick with COVID-19 symptoms and have any of these high-risk conditions, talk with a provider ASAP to see if you should get early COVID-19 treatment:
- People who are overweight or obese or;
- People with diabetes or high blood pressure or;
- People who are pregnant or;
- People with lung problems, heart problems, or kidney problems or;
- People with weakened immune systems or;
- People who are over age 65 or;
- People who have not gotten the COVID-19 vaccine or;
- People with other chronic health problems (ask your doctor)

OptumServe sites throughout the county will begin offering "one-stop shops" where persons can get tested, evaluated for treatment by a provider via telehealth, and supplied the medicine all in one visit. This is available at no cost to patients, though insurance is requested if available. The Test-to-Treat program will start with its mobile van and Porterville College locations before expanding to other locations; only oral treatments will be available at these sites. Appointments can be made online at http://LHI.care or by calling 888-634-1123.

A provider can determine which, if any, treatment is recommended. This may depend on personal factors like your health problems, age, what medicines you take, and whether you are pregnant or breastfeeding. People who have not gotten the vaccine are at much higher risk for severe disease, but treatment is still be indicated for high-risk health conditions even if persons have received the vaccine.

IV monoclonal antibody treatment is only available at certain locations. The exact treatment may change to make sure it is effective against the current virus variant. Supply may be limited at times so may not necessarily be available at all providers at all times:
- Porterville
  - Sierra View Hospital: by provider referral only
- Tulare
  - Tulare Adventist ER: walk-in to ER to see a provider
- Visalia
  - Kaweah Health: via self-referral Mon-Sat 8a-5p (call 559-624-2161)

These FDA EUA approved treatments are currently the only recommended treatment for non-hospitalized patients with COVID-19 and data suggests they remain effective against current Omicron variants. Other treatments previously suggested in the pandemic (e.g. ivermectin, azithromycin, hydroxychloroquine) are not recommended by NIH as they do not have proven efficacy and may even be harmful in some situations without clinical monitoring.

As a reminder, staying up-to-date with your vaccination remains critical for preventing COVID-19 infection and severe disease—including for those with a history of infection. Booster vaccines for all persons age 12 years and older once eligible are strongly recommended as data shows a greatly increased protection against Omicron. Second boosters are also now available for persons over age 50, immunosuppressed persons, and certain Johnson & Johnson recipients. Visit myturn.ca.gov or call 1-833-422-5255 for vaccine appointments.

Online Resources:

CDC, Treatments Your Healthcare Provider Might Recommend If You are Sick: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/treatments-for-severe-illness.html

CDPH, COVID-19 Treatments: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Treatments.aspx#

FDA, Paxlovid EUA Patient Fact Sheet: https://www.fda.gov/media/155051/download

FDA, Bebtelovimab EUA Patient Fact Sheet: https://www.fda.gov/media/156153/download

FDA, Molnupiravir EUA Patient Fact Sheet: https://www.fda.gov/media/155055/download