

ORAL ANTIVIRALS FOR THE TREATMENT OF COVID-19

This treatment guidance document summarizes two new anti-viral oral medications for treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 disease: molnupiravir and nirmatrelvir co-packaged with ritonavir (Paxlovid). Both received FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) December 2021. This information is subject to rapid change as more is learned.

At Wellforce, acknowledging significant limitations of available treatment courses, at this time we are prioritizing treatment of COVID-19 in unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated individuals with clinical risk factors for severe illness and vaccinated individuals who are not expected to mount an adequate immune response.

| DRUG | MOLNUPIRAVIR | NIRMALTREVIR/RITONAVIR |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Patient population | Age 18+ | Age 12+ with weight 40kg+ |
| FDA EUA indication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive SARS-CoV-2 test • Non-hospitalized patients with mild to moderate symptomatic COVID-19 (O2 sat > 93%) with at least one comorbidity* at risk for hospitalization/death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If patient is hospitalized for reasons other than COVID, therapy can be continued to complete 5 days, however short course (3 day) remdesivir is preferred • Must be initiated within 5 days of symptom onset • NOT indicated for pre-exposure or post-exposure prophylaxis | |
| *Comorbidities | > 65 years old Blood stem cell transplant Cancer Chronic kidney disease Chronic liver disease Chronic lung disease Dementia or other neurological conditions Diabetes Down syndrome Heart Conditions HIV infection Mental Health conditions | Overweight and obese BMI > 25 Pregnancy Sickle cell disease Smoking (current or former) Solid organ transplant Stroke/ Cerebrovascular disease Substance abuse disorder Tuberculosis A full list is available on the CDC website https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-care/underlyingconditions.html |
| DOSING | | |
| | 200 mg, 4 capsules BID x 5 days with or without food | 300 mg nirmaltrevir (two 150 mg tablets) plus 100 mg ritonavir BID x 5 days, with or without food |
| Packaging | Bottle (40 capsules) | Blister Pack (20 tabs) |
| Renal impairment | No adjustment | eGFR > 60 ml/min: no adjustment eGFR ≥ 30 to <60 mL/min: 150 mg nirmatrelvir and 100 mg ritonavir twice daily eGFR < 30 ml/min: not recommended |
| Hepatic impairment | No adjustment | OK to use in Childs-Pugh class A,B Class C not recommended as no data |

continued

| DRUG | MOLNUIRAVIR | NIRMALTREVIR/RITONAVIR |
|---|--|--|
| SIDE EFFECTS | | |
| | Diarrhea (2%) Nausea (1%) Dizziness (1%) Embryo-fetal toxicity (see special populations below) Risk of Bone and Cartilage Toxicity (not approved in patients < 18 yo) | Dysgeusia (6%) Diarrhea (3%) Hypertension (1%) Myalgia (1%) LFT abnormalities |
| DRUG INTERACTIONS | | |
| | None known at this time | Ritonavir is a potent CYP3A inhibitor See Appendix 1 below |
| SPECIAL POPULATIONS | | |
| HIV issues | No data; not contraindicated | Patient on current HIV medications containing ritonavir or cobicistat should continue their HIV regimen as usual, no dose adjustment Risk of developing protease inhibitor mutations in patients with uncontrolled or unknown HIV+ status |
| Females of childbearing potential | Not recommended during pregnancy Recommended to obtain a pregnancy test prior to starting treatment Reliable contraception during treatment and for 4 days after | Ritonavir safe in pregnancy Nirmaltrevir — human studies lacking If using oral contraceptives — need alternative method as ritonavir will inactivate |
| Lactation | Not recommended during treatment or for 4 days after; “pump and dump” | No data on effects on the breastfed infant |
| Males of childbearing potential | Reliable contraception during treatment and 3 months after; unknown long term effects on sperm | Not mentioned in EUA |
| PATIENT FACTSHEET MUST BE PROVIDED WHEN DISPENSING | | |
| | https://www.fda.gov/media/155055/download | https://www.fda.gov/media/155051/download |
| HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL FACTSHEET | | |
| | https://www.fda.gov/media/155054/download | https://www.fda.gov/media/155050/download |

MOLNUPIRAVIR

Molnupiravir received FDA EUA on 12/23/21 for treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in people age 18+ years who are at high risk of hospitalization or death. Its mechanism of action is RNA-dependent RNA polymerase inhibitor via “Error Catastrophe Method” (Kabinger 2021). Molnupiravir is a prodrug of N-hydroxycytosine (NHC), which is phosphorylated intracellularly to NHC triphosphate (NHC-TP). NHC-TP is then incorporated into viral RNA via viral polymerase, resulting in errors in the viral genome that prohibit viral replication.

Notable: The prodrug NHC has mutagenicity as well as fetal toxicity concerns.

NHC is mutagenic to mammalian cells; mutagenic ribonucleoside analogs can also enter the pathway to form DNA; ribonucleoside form of NHC able to cause mutations in a lung carcinoma cell line at low concentrations. Also theoretical concern exist that NHC could introduce mutations into virus, or cause birth defects. Genotoxicity studies by drug sponsor demonstrate it is mutagenic in some bacteria and a pig assay but not in a rat assay. (Zhou 2021; Haseltine 2021)

Phase 3 Clinical Trial (P002): MOVE-OUT Study

In a multicenter placebo-controlled RCT (1:1 randomization), nonhospitalized, nonvaccinated adults age 18+ with at least one risk factor for severe COVID-19 were given molnupiravir 800 mg PO twice per day vs placebo x 5 days, randomized within 5 days of onset of symptoms for PCR-proven COVID-19.

Inclusions: unvaccinated and nonhospitalized adults age 18+ years with mild to moderate COVID-19 (PaO₂ > 93%); randomized within 5 days of PCR-proven symptomatic disease; at least one risk factor for progression to severe disease (obesity, an age of over 60 years, diabetes, and heart disease, etc.)

Exclusions: Exclusion criteria included currently hospitalized or expected to need hospitalization for COVID-19 within 48 h of randomization, on dialysis, or having reduced estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) < 30 mL/min/1.73 m² by the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease (MDRD) equation, having any of the following conditions: human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), history of hepatitis B virus (HBV) or hepatitis C virus (HCV) with cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, hepatocellular carcinoma, aspartate aminotransferase (AST) and/or ALT >3X upper limit of normal and low platelet count <100,000/μL. (Bernal et al 2021; reviewed in Singh 2021).

Primary endpoint: Percentage of patients hospitalized or who died through day 29. Preplanned interim analysis when 50% of participants completed day 29 (n=775) which showed approximate 50% reduction in hospitalization or death with treatment. Therefore trial stopped as recommended by DMC (Data Monitoring Committee) in consultation with FDA. In the full population analysis, hospitalization and death were lower in the molnupiravir arm compared to placebo (6.8% vs 9.7%;, RR 31%). Molnupiravir has been approved for use in UK.

Study findings – Interim analysis: risk of hospitalization for any cause or death through day 29 was lower with molnupiravir (28 of 385 participants [7.3%]) than with placebo (53 of 377 [14.1%]) (difference, -6.8 percentage points; 95% confidence interval, -11.3 to -2.4; P=0.001). Adverse events were very similar on the two groups (216/710 participants (30.4%) in the molnupiravir group and 231/701 (33.0%) in the placebo group. (Bernal 2021).

NIRMALTRÉVIR/RITONAVIR (PAXLOVID)

Nirmaltrevir/ritonavir received FDA EUA 12/22/21 for treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in people age 12+ years weighing 40 kg or more who are at high risk of hospitalization or death. The mechanism of action of nirmaltrevir is a selective viral protease inhibitor. SARS-CoV-2 genome encodes two polyproteins essential for viral replication. They need to be cleaved into functional proteins by a viral protease so this action is blocked by nirmaltrevir. Because nirmaltrevir is metabolized by CYP3A4 enzymes, ritonavir can boost nirmaltrevir's plasma levels because ritonavir is a potent CYP3A4 inactivator. Ritonavir has no activity against SARS-CoV-2.

Notable. High risk of clinically significant drug interactions.

Boosting with ritonavir is the same strategy employed in HIV treatment, where HIV-targeted protease inhibitors' plasma levels are boosted by ritonavir. This strategy has drug interaction implications where there are many drugs that may have dangerously raised or lowered serum levels due to ritonavir's inhibition of CYP3A4. Every concomitant medication must be checked for drug interactions. Please see Appendix 1 for a list of drug interactions.

EPIC-HR study (NCT04960202)

In a multicenter placebo-controlled RCT (1:1 randomization), nonhospitalized, nonvaccinated adults age 18+ with at least one risk factor for severe COVID-19 were given nirmaltrevir 300 mg (two 150 mg tablets) and one 100 mg ritonavir tablet PO twice per day vs placebo x 5 days, randomized within 5 days of onset of symptoms for PCR-proven COVID-19.

Inclusions: unvaccinated nonhospitalized adults age 18+ years with mild to moderate COVID-19 s/s (O2 saturation >93%) and confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection within 5 days prior to randomization. At least one characteristic or underlying medical condition associated with increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (diabetes, overweight (BMI >25), chronic lung disease (including asthma), chronic kidney disease, current smoker, immunosuppressive disease or immunosuppressive treatment, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, sickle cell disease, neurodevelopmental disorders, active cancer, medically-related technological dependence, or were 60 years of age and older regardless of comorbidities).

Exclusions: related to COVID-19: prior COVID-19 vaccination, prior disease, prior convalescent serum, need for hospitalization. Other exclusions - females who are pregnant or breastfeeding or unable to use effective contraception during study period; active liver disease; moderate to severe renal impairment including dialysis, HIV infection with viral load >400 or on prohibited medications; current or expected use of any medications or substances that are highly dependent on CYP3A4 for clearance or are strong inducers of CYP3A4

Study findings: risk of hospitalization for COVID-19 or death from any cause through day 28 was lower with nirmaltrevir/ritonavir (8/1039 participants [0.8 %]) than with placebo (66/1046 [6.3%]) (difference, -5.62 percentage points; 95% confidence interval, -7.21 to -4.03; P<0.001).

Adverse events (all grades regardless of causality): in the treatment group ($\geq 1\%$) that occurred at a greater frequency (≥ 5 subject difference) than in the placebo group were dysgeusia (6% and <1%, respectively), diarrhea (3% and 2%), hypertension (1% and <1%), and myalgia (1% and <1%). The proportions of subjects who discontinued treatment due to an adverse event were 2% in the treatment group and 4% in the placebo group. (FDA Fact Sheet EUA 2021)

APPENDIX 1 – DRUG INTERACTIONS WITH RITONAVIR

The list below includes many common interactions, however please consult with a pharmacist prior to prescribing nirmatrelvir/ritonavir to evaluate for drug interactions.

| Drug Class | Drugs within Class | Effect on Concentration | Clinical Comments |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Alpha 1–adrenoreceptor antagonist | Alfuzosin Doxazosin tamsulosin | ↑ alfuzosin ↑ doxazosin ↑ alfuzosin | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential hypotension |
| Analgesics | pethidine piroxicam propoxyphene | ↑ pethidine ↑ piroxicam ↑ propoxyphene | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential for serious respiratory depression or hematologic abnormalities |
| Antianginal | ranolazine | ↑ ranolazine | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential for serious and/or life-threatening reactions |
| Antiarrhythmics | amiodarone dronedarone flecainide propafenone quinidine flecainide | ↑ antiarrhythmic | Co-administration contraindicated, If combination must be used, monitor for cardiac arrhythmias |
| Antiarrhythmics | bepidil lidocaine (systemic) | ↑ antiarrhythmic | Caution is warranted and therapeutic concentration monitoring is recommended for antiarrhythmics if available |
| Anticancer drugs | apalutamide | ↓ nirmatrelvir/ritonavir | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential loss of virologic response and possible resistance |
| Anticancer drugs | abemaciclib ceritinib dasatinib encorafenib ibrutinib ivosidenib neratinib nilotinib ruxolitinib venetoclax vinblastine vincristine | ↑ anticancer drug | Avoid co-administration of encorafenib or ivosidenib due to potential risk of serious adverse events such as QT interval prolongation. Avoid use of neratinib, venetoclax or ibrutinib. Co-administration of vincristine and vinblastine may lead to significant hematologic or gastrointestinal side effects. <i>For further information, refer to individual product label for anticancer drug.</i> |
| Anticoagulants | warfarin rivaroxaban apixaban | ↑↓ warfarin ↑ rivaroxaban ↑ apixaban | Closely monitor INR if co-administration with warfarin is necessary. Increased bleeding risk with rivaroxaban. Avoid concomitant use. Reduce apixaban dose by 50%. Avoid in patients who would otherwise receive 2.5 mg twice daily. |
| Anticonvulsants | carbamazepine phenobarbital phenytoin fosphenytoin lamotrigine | ↓ nirmatrelvir/ritonavir ↑ carbamazepine ↓ phenobarbital ↓ phenytoin ↓ lamotrigine | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential loss of virologic response and possible resistance |
| Antidepressants | bupropion trazodone mirtazapine | ↓ bupropion and active metabolite hydroxybupropion ↑ trazodone ↑ mirtazapine | Monitor for an adequate clinical response to bupropion. Adverse reactions of nausea, dizziness, hypotension, and syncope have been observed following co-administration of trazodone and ritonavir. A lower dose of trazodone should be considered. <i>Refer to trazodone product label for further information.</i> Monitor for increased mirtazapine effects. Dose reduction may be needed. |
| Anti-diabetic | Saxagliptin | ↑ saxagliptin | Limit the saxagliptin dose to 2.5 mg daily |

| Drug Class | Drugs within Class | Effect on Concentration | Clinical Comments |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Antifungals | voriconazole ketoconazole isavuconazonium sulfate itraconazole | ↓ voriconazole ↑ ketoconazole ↑ isavuconazonium sulfate ↑ itraconazole ↑ nirmatrelvir/ritonavir | Avoid concomitant use of voriconazole. <i>Refer to ketoconazole, isavuconazonium sulfate, and itraconazole product labels for further information.</i> |
| Anti-gout | colchicine | ↑ colchicine | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential for serious and/or life-threatening reactions in patients with renal and/or hepatic impairment |
| Anti-HIV protease inhibitors | amprenavir atazanavir darunavir fosamprenavir indinavir nelfinavir saquinavir tipranavir | ↑ protease inhibitor | <i>For further information, refer to the respective protease inhibitors' prescribing information.</i> Patients on ritonavir- or cobicistat-containing HIV regimens should continue their treatment as indicated. Monitor for increased PAXLOVID or protease inhibitor adverse events with concomitant use of these protease inhibitors |
| Anti-HIV | didanosine delavirdine efavirenz maraviroc nevirapine raltegravir zidovudine bictegravir/ emtricitabine/ tenofovir | ↑ didanosine ↑ efavirenz ↑ maraviroc ↓ raltegravir ↓ zidovudine ↑ bictegravir ↔ emtricitabine ↑ tenofovir | <i>For further information, refer to the respective anti-HIV drugs prescribing information</i> |
| Antimycobacterial | rifampin | ↓ nirmatrelvir/ritonavir | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential loss of virologic response and possible resistance. Alternate antimycobacterial drugs such as rifabutin should be considered |
| Antimycobacterial | bedaquiline rifabutin | ↑ bedaquiline ↑ rifabutin | <i>Refer to the bedaquiline product label for further information. Refer to rifabutin product label for further information on rifabutin dose reduction.</i> |
| Anti-parkinson | bromocriptine | ↑ bromocriptine | If combined, monitor closely for increased bromocriptine toxicities and consider bromocriptine dose reductions. |
| Anti-platelet | Ticagrelor | ↑↓ ticagrelor | Co-administration is contraindicated due to increased risk of dyspnea, bleeding. |
| Antipsychotics | lurasidone pimozide clozapine aripiprazole haloperidol | ↑ lurasidone ↑ pimozide ↑ clozapine ↑ aripiprazole ↑ haloperidol | Co-administration contraindicated due to serious and/or life-threatening reactions such as cardiac arrhythmias Aripiprazole reductions are recommended for indications other than major depressive disorder. <i>Refer to aripiprazole product label for further information.</i> |
| Antipsychotics | quetiapine olanzapine | ↑ quetiapine ↓ olanzapine | If co-administration is necessary, reduce quetiapine dose and monitor for quetiapine-associated adverse reactions. <i>Refer to the quetiapine prescribing information for recommendations.</i> Monitor patients receiving combination for reduced clinical effects of olanzapine. |
| Anti-spasmodic | Oxybutynin | ↑ oxybutynin | Monitor for signs of increased oxybutynin effects/toxicity (eg, anticholinergic effects) |
| Anti-viral | Letermovir | ↓ letermovir | Co-administration is not recommended due to potential for reduction in letermovir plasma concentrations |
| Calcium channel blockers | amlodipine diltiazem felodipine nicardipine nifedipine nimodipine | ↑ calcium channel blocker | Caution is warranted and clinical monitoring of patients is recommended. A dose decrease may be needed for these drugs when co-administered with PAXLOVID. <i>If co-administered, refer to individual product label for calcium channel blocker for further information.</i> |
| Cardiac glycosides | digoxin | ↑ digoxin | Caution should be exercised when co-administering PAXLOVID with digoxin, with appropriate monitoring of serum digoxin levels. <i>Refer to the digoxin product label for further information.</i> |

| Drug Class | Drugs within Class | Effect on Concentration | Clinical Comments |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Endothelin receptor Antagonists | bosentan | ↑ bosentan | Discontinue use of bosentan at least 36 hours prior to initiation of PAXLOVID. <i>Refer to the bosentan product label for further information.</i> |
| Ergot derivatives | dihydroergotamine ergotamine methylergonovine | ↑ dihydroergotamine ↑ ergotamine ↑ methylergonovine | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential for acute ergot toxicity characterized by vasospasm and ischemia of the extremities and other tissues including the central nervous system |
| Hepatitis C direct acting antivirals | elbasvir/grazoprevir, glecaprevir/pibrentasvir ombitasvir/paritaprevir/ ritonavir and dasabuvir sofosbuvir/velpatasvir/ voxilaprevir | ↑ antiviral | Increased grazoprevir concentrations can result in ALT elevations. It is not recommended to co-administer ritonavir with glecaprevir/pibrentasvir. <i>Refer to the ombitasvir/paritaprevir/ritonavir and dasabuvir label for further information.</i> <i>Refer to the sofosbuvir/velpatasvir/voxilaprevir product label for further information.</i> Patients on ritonavir-containing HCV regimens should continue their treatment as indicated. Monitor for increased PAXLOVID or HCV drug adverse events with concomitant use |
| Herbal products | St. John's Wort (hypericum perforatum) | ↓ nirmatrelvir/ritonavir | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential loss of virologic response and possible resistance |
| HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors | lovastatin simvastatin atorvastatin rosuvastatin | ↑ lovastatin ↑ simvastatin ↑ atorvastatin ↑ rosuvastatin | Co-administration contraindicated due to potential for myopathy including rhabdomyolysis Discontinue use of statin at least 12 hours prior to initiation of PAXLOVID and reinstate within 24 hours of Paxlovid completion. |
| Hormonal contraceptive | ethinyl estradiol | ↓ ethinyl estradiol | An additional, non-hormonal method of contraception should be considered. |
| Immuno-suppressants | cyclosporine tacrolimus sirolimus everolimus | ↑ cyclosporine ↑ tacrolimus ↑ sirolimus ↑ everolimus | Therapeutic concentration monitoring is recommended for immunosuppressants. Avoid use of PAXLOVID when close monitoring of immunosuppressant serum concentrations is not feasible. Avoid concomitant use of sirolimus and PAXLOVID. <i>If co-administered, refer to individual product label for immunosuppressant for further information.</i> |
| Long-acting beta-adrenoceptor agonist | salmeterol | ↑ salmeterol | Co-administration is not recommended. The combination may result in increased risk of cardiovascular adverse events associated with salmeterol, including QT prolongation, palpitations, and sinus tachycardia. |
| Narcotic analgesics | fentanyl methadone hydrocodone morphine tramadol oxycodone | ↑ fentanyl ↑ oxycodone ↑ hydrocodone ↑ morphine ↑↓ tramadol ↓ methadone | Careful monitoring of therapeutic and adverse effects (including potentially fatal respiratory depression) is recommended when opioids are concomitantly administered with PAXLOVID. Monitor methadone-maintained patients closely for evidence of withdrawal effects and adjust the methadone dose accordingly. |
| PDE5 inhibitor | sildenafil (Revatio®) when used for pulmonary arterial hypertension | ↑ sildenafil | Co-administration contraindicated due to the potential for sildenafil associated adverse events, including visual abnormalities hypotension, prolonged erection, and syncope |
| Sedative/hypnotics | triazolam oral midazolam alprazolam clonazepam diazepam trazodone zolpidem | ↑ triazolam ↑ midazolam ↑ alprazolam ↑ clonazepam ↑ trazodone ↑ zolpidem | Reduce alprazolam dose by 50% while taking ritonavir Co-administration can increase risk of sedation, Qtc prolongation. Consider a lower dose of trazodone when used with ritonavir. Monitor for increased zolpidem effects and toxicities |

| Drug Class | Drugs within Class | Effect on Concentration | Clinical Comments |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
| Sedative/hypnotics | midazolam (administered parenterally) | ↑ midazolam | Co-administration of midazolam (parenteral) should be done in a setting which ensures close clinical monitoring and appropriate medical management in case of respiratory depression and/or prolonged sedation. Dosage reduction for midazolam should be considered, especially if more than a single dose of midazolam is administered. <i>Refer to the midazolam product label for further information.</i> |
| Systemic corticosteroids | betamethasone budesonide ciclesonide dexamethasone fluticasone methylprednisolone, mometasone prednisone triamcinolone | ↑ corticosteroid | Increased risk for Cushing's syndrome and adrenal suppression. Alternative corticosteroids including beclomethasone and prednisolone should be considered. |
| Thyroid Products | Levothyroxine | ↓ levothyroxine | Monitor for signs and symptoms of hypothyroidism in patients taking thyroid products with ritonavir. Additional thyroid levels monitoring may be required |

FDA FACT SHEETS

FDA EUA Fact sheet for Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir) for healthcare professionals:

<https://www.fda.gov/media/155050/download>, accessed 12/26/21

FDA EUA fact sheet for Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir) for patients, parents, and caregivers:

must be given to patient when prescribing:

<https://www.fda.gov/media/155051/download>, accessed 12/26/21

FDA EUA fact sheet for molnupiravir for healthcare professionals:

<https://www.fda.gov/media/155054/download>, accessed 12/26/21

FDA EUA fact sheet for molnupiravir for patients and caregivers must be given to patient when prescribing:

<https://www.fda.gov/media/155055/download>, accessed 12/26/21

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<https://www.merck.com/eua/molnupiravir-hcp-fact-sheet.pdf>. Published December 23, 2021. Accessed January 4, 2022.

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FUN FACT: Drug prefixes are where creativity may be employed. The prefix mol- of molnupivavir was chosen to invoke Thor's hammer **Mjölnir** (Singh 2021). Thor is the god of thunder and lightning in Norse mythology, as well as a main character of the Marvel Comics Avengers series.