

FOR FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS

THERE ARE TREATMENTS FOR COVID-19 AND YOU CAN ASK FOR ONE.

A simple guide for families of nursing home residents.

WHY THIS MATTERS

If your loved one tests positive for COVID-19, there is a pill called **Paxlovid** that may keep them out of the hospital. But it only works if it is started in **the first 5 days of feeling sick**, so recognizing COVID-19 while it's still mild can make this possible.

WHY YOUR LOVED ONE IS AT HIGH RISK

Older adults and people with diabetes, heart problems, lung problems, or memory problems are more likely to get very sick from COVID than other people. Almost all nursing home residents have at least one risk factor. **That is why treatment matters.**

WHAT IS PAXLOVID?

Paxlovid is a pill, taken for 5 days, that fights the COVID virus inside the body. It is not a vaccine. It is given after someone starts feeling sick to keep them from getting worse.

It is the most common COVID-19 treatment in nursing homes. It lowers the chance of needing the hospital for severe COVID-19. There may be alternative treatment options, ask the doctor.

TIME MATTERS

Treatment must be started within the first 5 days of symptoms.

IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS SICK — WHAT TO DO

IF YOU GET A CALL

If the nurse says your loved one tested positive, ask **right then**: “Is Paxlovid being considered? When can it start?”

IF THEY HAVE SYMPTOMS

Ask: “Can you test for COVID today, even if it only looks like a cold?” New confusion or a fall can be COVID in older adults.

IF YOU CAN'T BE REACHED FAST

Ask the facility about **signing consent ahead of time**, so treatment can start the moment a test is positive, even on nights or weekends.

THINGS YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, AND WHAT WE KNOW

“THEY HAD THE VACCINE. DO THEY STILL NEED TREATMENT?”

Yes. Vaccines lower risk but do not erase it. Older adults can still get very sick. Treatment adds another layer of protection.

“WON’T THE SIDE EFFECTS BE BAD?”

The most common ones are a metallic taste in the mouth and loose stools.

“THEY TAKE A LOT OF MEDICINES. IS IT SAFE?”

The doctor and pharmacist check every medicine before starting. Sometimes one medication is adjusted or paused for the 5 days of treatment. Your care team will manage any medication adjustments.

“THEY CAN’T SWALLOW PILLS WELL.”

Tell the nurse. The pills cannot be crushed, but the team can talk through other options or supportive care. It is still worth asking about options.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE NURSE OR DOCTOR:

1. When did symptoms start? What day of symptoms are we on?
2. Has my loved one been tested for COVID? Can they be tested today?
3. If they have COVID, are they being given Paxlovid? If not, why not?
4. Are there any medicines being paused during treatment? Which ones, and for how long?
5. Can I sign a consent now so treatment can start faster next time?
6. Who do I call after hours if I have questions?