

# COVID-19 antiviral medicines

## Pharmacy guide for responding to public questions and requests

As part of summer planning, Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand's COVID-19 Care in the Community team has put together this guide to help pharmacies respond to public questions about free COVID-19 antiviral medicines, including:

1. People wondering about their eligibility
2. People wanting a phone appointment with a pharmacist to get antivirals without a prescription
3. People with a prescription wanting antivirals

### If you don't offer COVID-19 antivirals

If you don't offer these medicines, either with or without a prescription, you can still help customers with essential COVID-19 antivirals information and access.

- Give them the [Te Whatu Ora COVID-19 antiviral medicines factsheet](#)
- Give them contact information for the nearest pharmacy that provides antivirals
- Let them know that more information is available at **COVID19.health.nz**

[Use Healthpoint.co.nz to find pharmacies that provide antivirals without a prescription](#)

[Use Healthpoint.co.nz to find pharmacies that provide antivirals with a prescription](#)

### 1. People wondering about their eligibility

Anyone working at the pharmacy can share the following information with people to help them understand who is eligible for free COVID-19 antiviral medicines. **It may be useful to provide this information to all staff.**

#### **People eligible for free COVID-19 antiviral medicines:**

- *Māori or Pacific people aged 50 or over*
- *everyone aged 65 or over*
- *anyone aged 50 or over with fewer than 2 COVID-19 vaccinations*
- *anyone with a [severely weakened immune system](#)*
- *anyone with Down syndrome*
- *anyone with sickle cell disease*
- *anyone who has previously been in critical or high dependency hospital care from COVID-19*
- *anyone with 3 or more high-risk medical conditions*

#### **What are the high-risk medical conditions?**

- *chronic lung or airways disease*
- *serious heart conditions, such as congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease, rheumatic heart disease or congenital heart disease*
- *hypertension*
- *chronic neurological or neuromuscular disease*
- *diabetes*
- *chronic kidney disease*
- *severe liver disease, such as cirrhosis*
- *severe haematological disorders*
- *severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, bipolar or schizoaffective disorder*
- *active cancer*

- *morbid obesity (BMI greater than 35)*

You can share with people that if they fit into any of the above categories, they are eligible for free COVID-19 antivirals if they get sick with COVID-19 or are a household contact of someone with COVID-19 and have symptoms.

If they are not sure if they meet the criteria, or think they may not, you can give them the following advice:

*It's best to discuss this further with the pharmacist or your usual healthcare provider. You may still be eligible for COVID-19 antiviral medicines, particularly if you have any underlying health conditions.*

You can then arrange for a pharmacist to speak with them further, if your pharmacy offers antivirals, or put them in touch with a pharmacy that does.

Please remind people that antivirals must be started within 5 days of becoming sick, so it's best to have RATs on hand so they can test themselves as soon as they feel sick.

If you are a RAT collection centre or testing site, you can distribute this [Te Whatu Ora COVID-19 antiviral medicines flyer](#) with RATs.

## 2. People wanting a phone appointment with a pharmacist to get antivirals without a prescription

If you don't offer antivirals, you can say:	If you only offer antivirals with a prescription, you can say:	If you offer antivirals without a prescription
<p><i>We don't offer COVID-19 antiviral medicines but I can put you in touch with a nearby pharmacy that does.</i></p> <p>[Provide contact info of nearest pharmacy].</p> <p><a href="#">Use Healthpoint.co.nz to find pharmacies that provide antivirals without a prescription</a></p>	<p><i>We can provide antiviral medicines but you'll need a prescription or, if you prefer, I can put you in touch with a nearby pharmacy that offers antivirals without a prescription.</i></p> <p><i>You can call your usual healthcare provider for a phone appointment to ask for a prescription.</i></p> <p><a href="#">Use Healthpoint.co.nz to find pharmacies that provide antivirals without a prescription</a></p>	<p>Arrange for the person to speak with a pharmacist for an assessment.</p> <p>There is an online calculator to help clinicians assess if someone is eligible: <a href="#">Pharmac assessment tool</a></p> <p>Talk to the person about who will pick up their medicine (friends or whānau) or organise free delivery if needed.</p>

## 3. People with a prescription wanting antivirals

If you don't offer antivirals	If you offer antivirals (with a prescription)
<p>Direct them to the nearest pharmacy that offers antivirals.</p> <p><a href="#">Use Healthpoint.co.nz to find pharmacies that provide antivirals with a prescription</a></p>	<p>Talk to the person about who will pick up their medicine (friends or whānau) or organise free delivery if needed.</p>

Thank you for supporting this rollout of COVID-19 antiviral medicines to at-risk people in your communities. If you have questions or feedback, please contact the COVID-19 Care in the Community team: [COVIDCareintheCommunity@health.govt.nz](mailto:COVIDCareintheCommunity@health.govt.nz).