

# COVID-19 Update

## Update on COVID-19 therapies for long-term care

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To: Directors of care, managers, nurse practitioners, physicians and staff of long-term care facilities

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Dear colleagues,

Recently, various novel agents have become available in B.C. to treat COVID-19 in mild to moderately ill patients. These therapies include an anti-spike protein monoclonal antibody (mAB) sotrovimab (Xevudy) and a direct-acting oral combination antiviral nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid). This update is intended to provide further information to long-term care staff, medical staff and directors of care on referral pathways and resources available to ensure safe prescribing of these therapies to residents who test positive and are at higher risk of serious illness.

### Who is eligible for treatment

- Residents who test positive for COVID-19 and are considered at higher risk of serious illness may be eligible for COVID-19 therapies, including Paxlovid or sotrovimab (see assessment tools below).
- These therapies are most effective when they are administered within five or seven days (depending on the medication) of when an individual first develops COVID-19-like symptoms.

### Important clinical resources and tools

The province has developed a range of resources to support in the safe prescribing of these medications to British Columbians. Some of the most useful guides are listed below. For further information and available tools, visit the [BCCDC website](#).

- [Assess patient eligibility for Paxlovid and sotrovimab](#)
- [Drug-drug interactions and contraindications assessment](#)
- [Step-by-step assessment guide](#)

### Paxlovid prescribing

As of Tuesday Mar. 1, all clinicians including physicians in LTC are now authorized to prescribe Paxlovid to their patients who test positive and are eligible for treatment. Paxlovid induces numerous liver enzymes which can cause drug-drug interactions with significant potential for harm. For residents on additional medications, prescribers are obliged to review the above drug-drug interactions assessment before prescribing. This can be completed using the drug-drug interaction assessment tool above or by contacting the regional Central Intake Team for consultation. The province has also created a provincial COVID-19 Antivirals Support Line for clinicians and pharmacists who require consultation with a pharmacist. Please find details of both supports below.

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Note, the responsibility to conduct a best possible medication history and to check for potential drug-drug interactions lies with the MRP, in collaboration with a clinical pharmacist. If a clinical pharmacist is not available at your site, please see details of a provincial COVID-19 Antivirals Support Line for clinicians below.

## *Prescription form for Paxlovid*

The Paxlovid prescription form is now accessible from the [Special Authority page](#) where instructions are also posted about how to access Paxlovid for non-B.C. residents. The direct link to the prescription is available here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/forms/2368fil.pdf>. It is recommended that you always go to the form on the website, rather than printing a supply of these. The list of pharmacies will be updated regularly. Nursing staff can support the MRP/pharmacist in confirming that the form is completed and provide any requested information.

For sites using Cerner, there are electronic prescriptions for Paxlovid. The required checklist is available in the Comments section of the prescription and needs to be filled out prior to printing. Please refer to specific prescribing instructions that were sent out by your organization (e.g. PHC).

## **VCH referral process**

**Physicians in Vancouver or Richmond** who feel comfortable prescribing Paxlovid are free to do so using the tools above. However, if a resident is complex, eligibility is unclear, or if after assessment sotrovimab is the preferred therapy, a referral can be made through the central intake process by filling out this form: (<https://www.vhpharmsci.com/covid-19-resources>) and emailing it to: [covid.therapy@vch.ca](mailto:covid.therapy@vch.ca) or faxing to: 833.222.8131.

**In the Coastal Community of Care**, the same service can be accessed by contacting the COVID-19 physician on call at 778.984.4075 or emailing [CoastalID@vch.ca](mailto:CoastalID@vch.ca), seven days a week.

## **Provincial support for Paxlovid prescribing**

A provincial COVID-19 Antivirals Support Line for clinicians and pharmacists with questions about drug interactions has been established to ensure safe dispensing. Pharmacists are available to answer questions about the treatment window, contraindications, and interactions with other medications. For expert pharmacist advice, please call: **1-866-604-5924 (Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)**. A clerk will answer your call (or leave a voicemail) and arrange a pharmacist to call you back. Calls will be responded to as soon as possible during office hours.

## **Sotrovimab prescribing in LTC**

If a resident is eligible for sotrovimab and provides consent, the MRP should work with the home to complete a referral form as described above, emailing it to [covid.therapy@vch.ca](mailto:covid.therapy@vch.ca) for Richmond and Vancouver; and [CoastalID@vch.ca](mailto:CoastalID@vch.ca) for Coastal communities. VCH's recently established central intake team will screen the referral in consultation with specialist physicians and will notify the care home/MRP of the most appropriate next steps. If sotrovimab is recommended, VCH's central intake

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team will book an appointment for the resident to receive an IV infusion in an acute care setting. The team will notify the care home (via the Director of Care (DOC)/nurse leader) of the appointment details. The care home will be required to arrange safe transit for the resident to and from their appointment.

If the DOC, in consultation with the resident and the MRP, determines that it is in the best interest of the resident to receive the infusion at the care home, they can decline the infusion appointment and email [LTCEOC@vch.ca](mailto:LTCEOC@vch.ca) to arrange an in care home appointment.

## **Further clinical supports**

The province is hosting educational sessions for prescribing clinicians. B.C. Provincial Academic Detailing (PAD) are offering education sessions via Zoom focussing on eligibility criteria and drug-drug interaction management. To schedule, email [PAD@gov.bc.ca](mailto:PAD@gov.bc.ca) and provide your contact name, email and phone number; potential dates, times and group size (maximum 100 people); and your groups speciality area.