

# **Approval of Pfizer's Oral Treatment**

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This document is not meant to provide or take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or legal advice.

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## **I heard that Pfizer created a pill for people who have contracted COVID-19, what does this pill do?**

Pfizer's novel COVID-19 oral antiviral treatment, Paxlovid, is now being distributed throughout the world to help treat individuals who have contracted COVID-19. This treatment is "the first oral antiviral of its kind", as a SARS-CoV-2-3CL protease inhibitor, to block the activity of the virus. The pill was designed to be administered orally at the first sign of infection or at first awareness of an exposure, to help reduce the chances of severe illness, hospitalizations and death.

## **Has the pill been approved for use in Ontario yet?**

Yes, the antiviral treatment has now been approved in Ontario, as well as the rest of Canada. The pill will be available to people who have tested positive for COVID-19. This is the first oral and at-home prescription medication to be approved in the country since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Canada, the medication will be available to those who have mild to moderate symptoms, have tested positive on a PCR test (rapid antigen tests may be used in cases where PCR testing can't be done) and are at a high risk of further serious complications. Those who have been hospitalized due to COVID-19 with severe cases will not be eligible for this treatment.

“The authorization today provides a new tool in the toolkit against COVID-19 at a crucial time in the pandemic as we're faced with new variants. Importantly, it is a more accessible antiviral treatment for those at high risk of progression to severe COVID-19,” said Health Canada’s Chief Medical Adviser Dr. Supriya Sharma. Sharma was also quoted saying “No drug, including Paxlovid, is a substitute for vaccination”.

There is however a “limited global supply”, so the provinces have been asked to prioritize the medication for individuals who have a high likelihood of severe illness regardless of vaccination status, and those who are immunocompromised. As well as Canadians aged 60 or older who live in underserved rural or remote communities, long-term care homes, who are from First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities, or whose vaccinations are not up to date.

### **Can kids be treated with this medication?**

At this time, the Pfizer pill has only been approved for individuals 18 years of age or older.

### **Where can this treatment be obtained?**

Ontario is scheduled to receive approximately 10,000 courses of treatment in the month of January. There has yet to be any information provided on where the treatments can be obtained, but we may see more information on this in the coming days.

## **Ontario’s COVID-19 Reopening Plan**

### **When will Ontario be lifting their restrictions?**

Please see our “COVID-19 Weekly Updates” section for this information. A full list of all changes going into effect as of January 31 has been posted under the document dated January 21, 2022.

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## Sources:

- 1: [Canada approved Paxlovid, Pfizer's new oral COVID pill. What you need to know - National | Globalnews.ca](#)
- 2: [COVID-19 antivirals: Canada authorizes at-home Pfizer treatment | CTV News](#)
- 3: [Pfizer's Novel COVID-19 Oral Antiviral Treatment Candidate Reduced Risk of Hospitalization or Death by 89% in Interim Analysis of Phase 2/3 EPIC-HR Study | Pfizer](#)
- 3: [Ontario to receive 10,000 courses of Pfizer's Paxlovid COVID-19 pill in January | Globalnews.ca](#)

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at [www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus). Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local health unit at the following phone numbers:

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Peel Public Health: 905-799-7700

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711

York Region Public Health: 1-877-464-9675