

Resource

# FAQs on New Antiviral Treatment

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Updated August 2022

## Changes to accessing the Antiviral treatment

Previously, those who were eligible for the antiviral treatment were sent a confirmation letter and a priority PCR kit in the post. Since then, more anti-viral and nMAB (Neutralising monoclonal antibodies) treatments have become available to battle the virus and of course the COVID-19 landscape has changed. Now that PCR tests are no longer in use, patients will receive a lateral flow testing kit as well as a new letter. You can see the [letter here](#).

The process will then be as follows:

- As soon as you develop COVID symptoms (even if these are mild), use the lateral flow test.
- Report your test result at: <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> or by calling 119.
- You will be asked for your NHS number and postcode.
- If the result is positive, wait to be contacted about treatment. If your test is negative then you are

advised to take additional tests for the next 2 days (totalling 3 tests over 3 consecutive days), these should also be reported as outlined above.

- If after 24 hours you have had no contact, call your GP or 111.

The [following letter](#) has been sent to healthcare professionals to make them aware of this process.

## Who is eligible for the treatment?

The official list of those eligible can be found [here](#).

Of relevance to patients with RA and JIA is the following:

- “people who have received a B-cell depleting therapy (anti-CD20 drug for example rituximab, ocrelizumab, ofatumab, obinutuzumab) in the last 12 months”.
- “people who are on biologics<sup>[footnote 8]</sup> or small molecule JAK-inhibitors (except anti-CD20 depleting monoclonal antibodies) or who have received these therapies within the last 6 months”.
- “people who are on corticosteroids (equivalent to greater than 10mg per day of prednisolone) for at least the 28 days prior to positive PCR”.
- “people who are on current treatment with mycophenolate mofetil, oral tacrolimus, azathioprine/mercaptopurine (for major organ involvement such as kidney, liver and/or interstitial lung disease), methotrexate (for interstitial lung disease) and/or ciclosporin”.
- “people who exhibit at least one of: (a) uncontrolled or clinically active disease (that is required recent increase in dose or initiation of new immunosuppressive drug or IM steroid injection or course of oral steroids within the 3 months prior to positive PCR); and/or (b) major organ involvement such as significant kidney, liver or lung inflammation or significantly impaired renal, liver and/or lung function”.

The full clinical commissioning policy which will be effective from 13 June 2022 can be found [here](#).

## How to get a lateral flow test

Due to the government ending free access to lateral flow tests for the coronavirus, there are now only certain groups of individuals that can receive free lateral flow test kits. Check you are eligible to receive a lateral flow test on the [GOV.uk website](#).

If you are eligible:

Order your lateral flow tests via [Order coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rapid lateral flow tests – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Alternatively, you can ring 119 if you have not received your lateral flow test. The weblink provided does not ask for proof of eligibility, just to confirm that you are. If you want further guidance on this, please check the [following article](#).

Please note that the test used must be one provided by the government and privately purchased tests cannot be used.

## Who do I speak to if I think I am eligible, but I have not been contacted?

If you do not receive a letter, then you may still be eligible. You can follow the same process but will

have to acquire the lateral flow tests yourself. It is important that you only get the NHS/government provided lateral flow tests as privately sourced tests will not be recognised in the system. You can get the tests using the process above. If you get a positive test wait 24 hours to be contacted. After this time period you can then call either the GP, NHS 111 or your specialist clinician for an urgent referral.

## The Treatments

There are four treatments available in different forms – “antivirals” and “nMABs” (Neutralising monoclonal antibodies).

| Treatment name                            | Treatment type | Administration method               |
|---|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| “Paxlovid” – nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir* | Antiviral      | Tablets                             |
| “Xevudy” – sotrovimab                     | nMAB           | Intravenous infusion                |
| “Veklury” – remdesivir                    | Anitviral      | Intravenous infusion                |
| “Lagevrio” – molnupiravir                 | Antiviral      | Tablets (every 12 hours for 5 days) |

Paxlovid OR Xevudy can be administered are first-line treatments, Veklury is a second-line treatment and Lagevrio is a third-line treatment. Combination treatment with an nMAB and an antiviral is NOT routinely recommended.

Those who receive an oral form treatment will either be asked to collect the treatment from one of the available centres or it will be delivered to their home.

Those who are having an intravenous infusion treatment will be required to attend an appropriate treatment centre where the treatment will be administered. Infusions are expected to take around half a day in total.

For more information on the treatments available for coronavirus, please see the NHS information, [found here](#).

See?[this link](#)?to find out about co-administration of medications with these treatments.

If I am not eligible is there another way of getting involved in the treatment?

Where patients are ineligible for treatment under this policy, recruitment to the Oxford university “PANORAMIC trial”, which is building the evidence for novel oral antivirals in a broader cohort of at-risk patients, should be supported.

You can see the criteria for signing up to this study on?[their website](#).

For more information on eligibility to COVID tests and antiviral treatment in:

Wales – <https://www.wmic.wales.nhs.uk/navs-cymru/>

Scotland – <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-treatments>

Northern Ireland – <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/treatments-coronavirus-covid-19>

Have more general question to do with COVID-19 and RA? Check out our [COVID information page](#) and [latest updates page](#). Alternatively, follow us on social media via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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