

European drugs agency endorses steroid for COVID treatment

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SARS-CoV-2 (shown here in an electron microscopy image). Credit: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, NIH

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) on Friday endorsed use of the steroid dexamethasone to treat oxygen-starved patients of COVID-19.

The EU drug watchdog said in a statement that dexamethasone can be a [treatment option](#) for patients who require oxygen therapy.

"Based on the review of available data, EMA is endorsing the use of dexamethasone in adults and adolescents (from 12 years of age and weighing at least 40 kilograms) who require supplemental [oxygen therapy](#)," it said.

A UK study showed in July that 29 percent of coronavirus patients on ventilators who received dexamethasone died within 28 days of starting the treatment, compared to 41 percent of those not given it.

In patients who received oxygen without ventilation, the figures were 23 percent with dexamethasone and 26 percent without.

Earlier this month, the World Health Organisation encouraged countries to maintain stocks of corticosteroids such as dexamethasone for COVID-19 treatment.

Another study published in the *JAMA* [medical journal](#) showed that medicines such as dexamethasone in the corticosteroid family reduced mortality in patients with severe COVID-19 symptoms by 21 percent over 28 days.

No other medicine has yet been shown to reduce coronavirus mortality.

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