

Biden admin to promote availability of COVID antiviral pill

April 23 2022, by Zeke Miller



President Joe Biden waves as he leaves after speaking at Green River College, Friday, April 22, 2022, in Auburn, Wash. Credit: AP Photo/Andrew Harnik

President Joe Biden and his administration want Americans and their doctors to know that the country has an ample supply of the life-saving

COVID-19 antiviral treatment Paxlovid and that it no longer needs to be rationed.

First approved in December, supply of the Pfizer regimen was initially [very limited](#), but as COVID-19 cases across the country have fallen and manufacturing has increased it is now far more abundant. The White House is now moving to raise awareness of the pill and taking steps to make it easier to access.

Paxlovid, when administered within five days of symptoms appearing, has been proven to bring about 90% reduction in hospitalizations and deaths among patients most likely to get [severe disease](#). About 350 Americans are now dying each day from the coronavirus, down from more than 2,600 during the height of the omicron wave earlier this year.

A senior administration official said usage of the antiviral regimen has "more than doubled" over the last few weeks, but the administration has more supply at the ready that can save lives and prevent serious disease if prescribed in a timely fashion.

The U.S. has ordered enough supply of the pills for 20 million people, which is estimated to last for several more months. The administration has warned that subsequent deliveries are dependent on Congress approving additional COVID-19 response funding.

Biden officials are planning to highlight the relative abundance of the drug next week, and [government officials](#) will be stepping up their outreach to patients and providers.

The Food and Drug Administration authorized Pfizer's drug for adults and children ages 12 and older with a positive COVID-19 test and early symptoms who face the highest risk of severe outcomes. That includes [older people](#) and those with conditions like obesity and heart disease,

though the drug is not recommended for patients with severe kidney or [liver problems](#).

The effort includes expanding the availability of the pills by providing a direct-to-pharmacy ordering pathway for the drug. Currently the [federal government](#) relies on states to determine where the supply goes, and about 20,000 locations carry the pill, including 2,000 so-called "test to treat" locations that can provide the treatment immediately after a positive test result.

The administration believes the pharmacy channel, which it used to boost availability of COVID-19 vaccines more than a year ago, will similarly make the antiviral pills more available to people.

News of the pharmacy expansion was first reported by Bloomberg.

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