

Test positive for COVID? Here's how to get your free meds

April 4 2022, by Dennis Thompson



Pretty sure you have COVID, but unsure about what you need to do

next?

A new U.S. federal website can now direct you to locations in your community where you can pick up a free prescription for lifesaving [antiviral COVID pills](#).

The COVID-19 Test to Treat Locator can even show you if there's somewhere in your community where you can get tested for free and pick up your prescription at the same time.

The Biden administration first [announced](#) the Test to Treat initiative last month as a way to help people infected with COVID get treatment as quickly as possible.

"You want to get treatment as quickly as you possibly can when someone's infected," said chief White House medical adviser Dr. Anthony Fauci. "The sooner you treat them following an infection, the greater the chance of keeping them out of the hospital."

There now are two antiviral COVID pills that work much the same way that Tamiflu does in reducing the length and severity of influenza—Pfizer's [Paxlovid](#) and Merck's [Lagevrio](#).

But as with other antivirals like Tamiflu, these pills must be taken within five days of your first COVID symptoms to prevent [severe illness](#) and hospitalization.

"If somebody finds out they're infected and they have to wait multiple days to get a drug, that's lost time that diminishes the efficacy of the antivirals," said Fauci, who is director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Sick people can type their zip code into an online Test to Treat tool that

went live last week, and it will show them nearby pharmacies where they can take a doctor's prescription to get COVID antivirals.

You choose the range of the location search, which can identify sites as far away as 250 miles from your [zip code](#).

The tool also will show locations of "[One-Stop Test to Treat](#)" sites, where you can get tested for COVID and pick up your medication during the same visit.

Some of the nation's largest pharmacy chains are participating in the "One-Stop" program if they have a [health clinic](#) either in a store or located nearby. Many community health centers and long-term care facilities are participating as well.

You can even bring at-home [test](#) results to a "One-Stop" site to get a prescription for COVID antivirals, according to a Test to Treat fact sheet.

"The Test to Treat initiative does not require that an individual is tested at the Test to Treat site," the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services fact sheet says.

If you don't have a "One-Stop" site in your community, you'll have to go to a doctor's office or health clinic to be tested for COVID and pick up a prescription. Then you'll take the prescription to a pharmacy for your free meds.

Here is the [COVID-19 Test to Treat Locator](#), or you can call 1-800-232-0233 to get help in English, Spanish and more than 150 other languages. The phone bank operates from 8 a.m. to midnight ET, seven days a week.

More information: The HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response has more about the [Test to Treat Initiative](#).

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