

# Paxlovid soon will not be free for Americans

December 8 2022

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The antiviral Paxlovid has kept patients from becoming severely ill and dying from COVID-19 since it became available—at no cost to them. But by the middle of next year, the U.S. government will stop

subsidizing the medication. Instead, it will be billed for like many other medications.

While the Biden administration has paid about \$530 for each course of the medication by buying 20 million courses in bulk, the drug is expected to cost much more when it reaches the open market, *Kaiser Health News* reported.

Pfizer, the maker of Paxlovid, has declined to share its pricing plan, but the company has announced that its COVID-19 vaccine will cost \$120 per dose when it is no longer provided by the government, about four times as much as it had previously charged. Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla has told investors that Paxlovid and the company's COVID-19 vaccine will be "a multibillion-dollars franchise."

But that may make the medication less accessible for people who cannot afford it, *Kaiser Health News* said.

Other treatments for COVID-19 will be commercialized even sooner, *Kaiser Health News* reported. At this point, about 6 million Americans have taken free Paxlovid doses. The drug remains available through an emergency use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, but full approval may take months or years. That means that people covered by Medicare Part D will not have [insurance coverage](#) of the antiviral because [federal law](#) requires that Medicare drugs have full approval.

That group may simultaneously be most in need of the medication, as about 90 percent of those now dying from COVID-19 are 65 years and older, *Kaiser Health News* reported. Federal health experts said paying out of pocket would be "a substantial barrier" for seniors covered by Medicare, according to the news agency. Medicaid will cover Paxlovid treatments in full at least until early 2024.

**More information:** [More Information](#)

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