

WHO updates its guidance on treatments for COVID-19

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A panel of international experts representing the World Health Organization's Guideline Development Group has updated its guidance on treatments for patients with COVID-19.

The new recommendations published by *The BMJ* are part of a living guideline, developed by the World Health Organization with the methodological support of MAGIC Evidence Ecosystem Foundation, to provide up to date, trustworthy guidance on the management of COVID-19 and help doctors make better decisions with their patients.

The guidance incorporates the latest clinical trial evidence for existing and new COVID-19 therapies and takes account of evidence relating to safety, prognosis, resources, access, and equity issues, as well as patient values and preferences.

The updates include:

- Distinct risk categories to help doctors more accurately assess whether an individual is at high, moderate, or low risk of hospital admission and tailor treatment accordingly.
- A new treatment benefit threshold of 1.5% (down from 6%) reduction in the risk of hospital admission. This reflects the lower baseline risk for most patients with non-severe COVID-19 as well as more safety evidence and wider availability of therapies.
- A [recommendation](#) to use the antiviral drug nirmatrelvir-ritonavir in patients with non-severe COVID-19 at high and moderate risk of hospital admission.
- A recommendation against use of the antiviral drugs remdesivir and molnupiravir for patients with non-severe COVID-19 at moderate and low risk of hospital admission (treatment is suggested for patients at high risk of admission).
- A recommendation against use of a new antiviral (VV116) for patients with COVID-19 except in clinical trials, regardless of illness severity.
- A strong recommendation against the use of ivermectin for patients with non-severe COVID-19 (advice against use of

ivermectin in patients with severe or critical COVID-19, except in [clinical trials](#), still exists).

The experts say the new recommendations reflect changes in the virulence and transmissibility of circulating SARS-CoV-2 variants and sub-variants, along with changes in immunity related to global vaccinations, which have led to lower baseline risks of severe illness and death for most [patients](#) with non-severe COVID-19.

They acknowledge that there are still uncertainties around COVID-19 therapeutics and emerging evidence and say these recommendations need to be used in light of these uncertainties.

An [interactive decision support tool](#) is available to accompany this [guidance](#).

More information: Arnav Agarwal et al, A living WHO guideline on drugs for covid-19, *BMJ* (2020). [DOI: 10.1136/bmj.m3379](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3379)

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