

Important: Access to Covid-19 treatments

The NHS is offering new antibody and antiviral treatments to people with coronavirus (COVID-19) who are at highest risk of becoming seriously ill.

Access schemes are running in all four home nations with slight changes in approach but the basic criteria for accessing these treatments is the same.

What are the treatments?

Two types of COVID-19 treatment are available:

- sotrovimab (Xevudy) - neutralising monoclonal antibody (nMAb).
- molnupiravir (Lagevrio) - an antiviral medicine.

These treatments can help some people manage their COVID-19 symptoms and reduce the risk of becoming seriously ill.

Access to one of these treatments depends on your underlying condition (as below) and will only be given following a positive PCR test. The therapies will be made available to adults and children (aged 12 or over) identified as being at the very highest risk of severe symptoms, admission to hospital or death from coronavirus – see list below.

Who will have access to these treatments?

The UK Chief Medical Officers have agreed on a list of eligible conditions as follows:

- Primary immune deficiencies
- Patients with a haematologic malignancy (cancer of the blood)
- Patients with immune-mediated inflammatory disorders
- Patients with a solid cancer
- Solid organ transplant recipients
- Patients affected HIV/AIDS
- Down's syndrome and other genetic conditions
- Sickle cell disease
- Patients with a renal (kidney) disease
- Patients with liver disease
- Patients with rare neurological conditions

Will I be contacted by the NHS?

Immunodeficiency UK understands that eligible patients in England (see above) are now being contacted by the NHS. There is an example of an email received by a patient in England with CVID at the end of this document. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the way of contacting you may differ but the principle of access to the Covid treatments remains the same.

Please note that the system of contacting all patients who might qualify for access to these therapies may not be perfect. As you may recall there have been problems with contacting all patients eligible for the third primary dose of the Covid vaccine. **We, therefore, advise you, that if you have an immunodeficiency and test positive by PCR for COVID you should inform NHS Track and Trace about your underlying condition. They will then be able to assess if you qualify for one of these therapies.**

How will it work?

- In England the NHS will be sending eligible patients PCR kits to use at home. If you don't receive a PCR kit (they should arrive by the 10th January 2022) then call 119 for advice, selecting the option for Test & Trace.

At present it seems that PCR testing kits will not be sent to eligible patients in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland but PCR tests can be obtained, as usual from this website

[Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

- Take a PCR test if you get coronavirus symptoms or have a positive lateral test.
- If the PCR test confirms that you have coronavirus: the NHS will contact you within 24 hours to arrange a telephone appointment with a health professional. If you are not contacted about treatment within 24 hours of your positive PCR test result, please contact your GP surgery or call 111. They can make an urgent referral.

When and where will the treatments be given?

The NHS will advise which treatment, if any, is suitable for you.

Where monoclonal antibody (Mab) treatment is required, you might have to travel to a day clinic at a hospital to receive a monoclonal antibody treatment which is normally given by intravenous infusion (in your vein).

If you are given molnupiravir (the anti-viral medicine) it normally comes as capsules you swallow and they can be taken at home.

A hospital pharmacy will usually arrange for the medicine to be delivered to you or it can be collected by someone else such as a friend, relative or NHS volunteer responder.

Information links for the four home nations

Wales

Guidance on Covid-19 treatments can be found at this link [COVID-19 treatments | GOV.WALES](https://www.gov.wales)

The information states 'You will receive a letter from your health board if you are in this group'.

Northern Ireland

It is not clear from the information provided how patients will be contacted in advance about this scheme, but it does say 'Eligible patients who receive a positive PCR test result will be contacted by a clinician from the health service to discuss what treatments could be suitable for them'.

[Health Minister welcomes new treatments for COVID-19 patients | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

Scotland

Information on direct access to coronavirus treatments for highest risk individuals (from 22 December 2021) can be found here [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Treatments | NHS inform](https://www.nhs.uk) . We are not sure how and when eligible patients will be contacted.

England

[Treatments for coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Copy of email sent to a COVID patient in England about access to the Covid treatments

Your NHS number: xxxx

Your reference code: xxxx

Dear xxxxx ,

Important information about new treatments for coronavirus.

The NHS is using new treatments for coronavirus. Your medical records show that you might be suitable for these treatments if a PCR test confirms that you have coronavirus.

These treatments need to be given quickly after you start to feel unwell. They can stop you from getting seriously ill. More information: <https://www.nhs.uk/CoronavirusTreatments>

You should:

1. Have a PCR test kit ready at home.
2. Take a PCR test if you get coronavirus symptoms.
3. If the PCR test confirms that you have coronavirus: the NHS will call you to tell you how you might get a treatment.

Coronavirus treatments can help you if you are ill, but vaccination is still the best protection for you and your loved ones.

1. Have a PCR test kit ready at home

NHS Test & Trace are sending you a PCR coronavirus test kit to keep so that you can get tested quickly if you have any coronavirus symptoms.

This kit will be sent to the address that you have provided to the NHS. Tell your GP as soon as possible if your address has changed. NHS Test & Trace can send replacement tests.

Call 119 for advice, selecting the option for Test & Trace, if:

- you have not received a PCR test by 10 January 2022
- you develop symptoms before your PCR test arrives
- you lose your PCR test or it has any damage or missing parts.

2. Take a PCR test if you get coronavirus symptoms

Use your PCR test if you develop any coronavirus symptoms, even if they are mild: a high temperature, a new continuous cough (coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours), a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

If you get coronavirus symptoms and don't have a PCR test kit at home, you can still get a PCR test by phoning 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

When registering a PCR test, it is very important that you enter your NHS number and postcode correctly. This lets you get your test result and allows the NHS to contact you about treatment if you have coronavirus.

3. If the PCR test confirms that you have coronavirus

If the PCR test shows that you have got coronavirus, the NHS will contact you within 24 hours to arrange a telephone appointment with a health professional.

If you are not contacted about treatment within 24 hours of your positive PCR test result, please contact your GP surgery or call 111. They can make an urgent referral.

Why have you sent me this letter?

Health experts have looked at the health conditions which put people more at risk of coronavirus. This has been agreed by UK chief medical officers.

Your medical records show that you have, or previously had, one or more of those health conditions, which means that these new treatments might be suitable for you if a PCR test confirms you have coronavirus.

You can find out how the NHS has used your information to identify and contact you about this treatment at <https://www.digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/treatments/transparency-notice>.

Yours sincerely

Professor Stephen Powis

National Medical Director

NHS England and NHS Improvement

If you need this letter in easy read or other languages, a copy of the letter can be viewed via

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/treatments>

If you require this letter in braille or other languages, please contact england.contactus@nhs.net

Ends

Approved by the Chair of the Immunodeficiency UK Medical Advisory Panel, 20th December 2021.